A MINSTREL FRIAR

Irwin St. John Tucker

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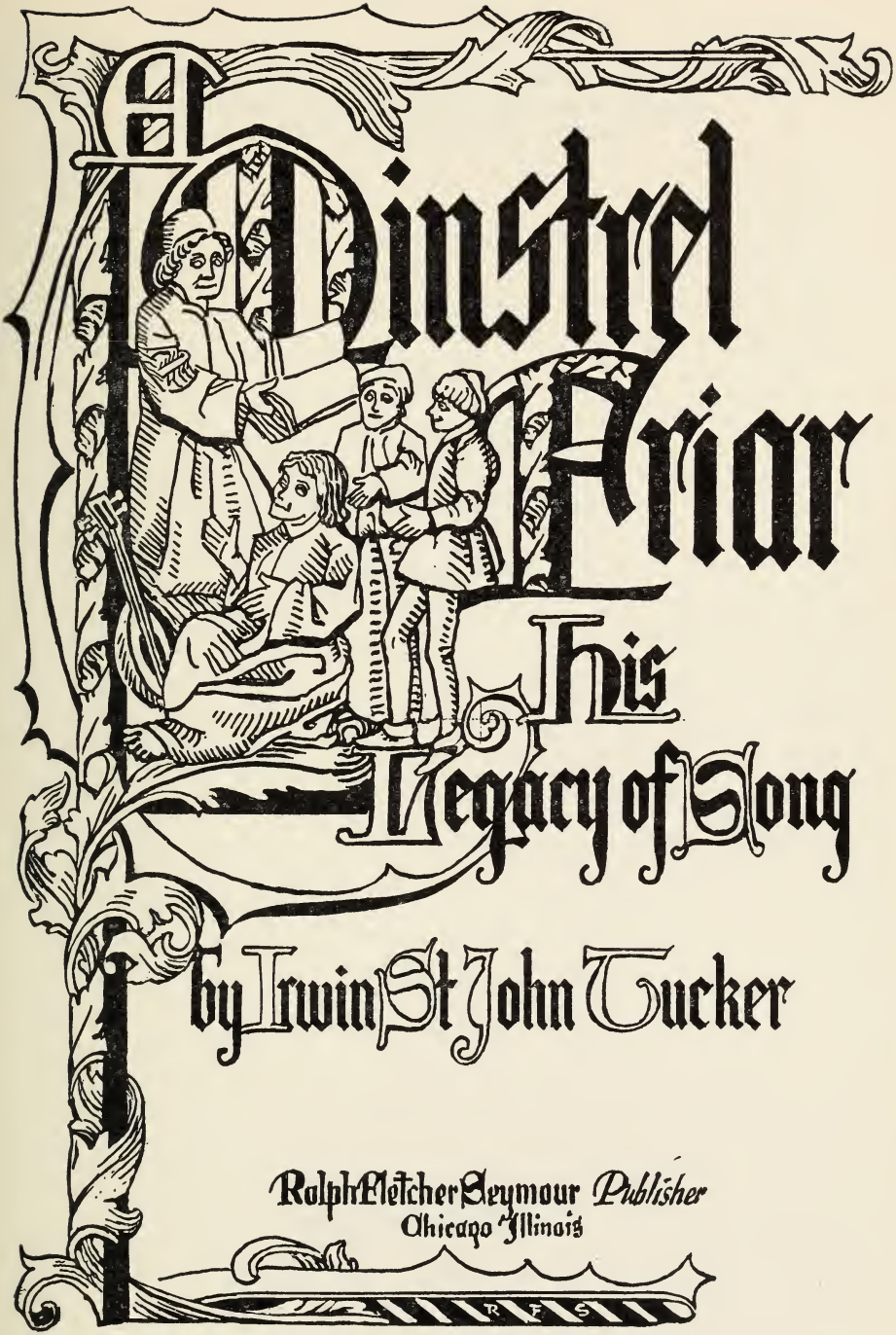
His Legacy of Song



A Minstrel Friar

His Legacy of Song

by Irwin St John Tucker

Ralph Fletcher Seymour *Publisher*
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TO MY THREE SONS:

Ernest Edward,

John Irwin,

Daniel Eugene

AND THEIR MOTHER

Ellen Dorothy

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MY LEGACY OF SONG

By

Irwin St. John Tucker

A Legacy of Song

At the End of the Road

On attaining the age of sixty-four years I am confronted with the realization that there is little I can leave you in the way of property. That causes me small regret, because possessions have meant little at any age of the world, and they mean less now. But though there is small wealth in the form of things material for you to inherit, possessions of more enduring worth are already yours. It is in the hope that you will realize these to their full extent while we are all together that I am writing this, my legacy of song.

In the New Testament it is written that when Peter and John, at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, were asked for alms, Peter fixed his eyes upon the petitioner and said:

> "Silver and gold have I none, but such
> as I have, give I thee."

So it is with us. Through your mother and me, you boys have received your being. Such as we are, we gave you. Circumstances may condition what you may obtain for yourselves. But what you have been and what you will be and do, depend fundamentally on what you are; and that is a matter of birthright.

Heredity is the whole of the past as it bears upon you, through the life-stream of which you partake. Environment is the whole of the present, as it bears upon you. Ideal is the whole of the future as you tend toward it. In these three dimensions, every life is cast. They are indivisible, but inconfusable.

It was heredity that determined you should be human boys, not lion cubs. Because your parents are human, you received the imprint of humanity, and do not wear the outward gesture of tragic-eyed monkeys, or chattering parrots, or rapacious sharks, or murderous praying mantises.

Being human boys to start with, you are white American boys, not Chinese, nor Japanese, nor Ethiopians, nor Italians, nor English, nor Irish nor Scotch nor German. You were born in Chicago--each of you in a different sector --for only one reason; and that is that your parents, and specifically your mother, were here at the time. You have been surrounded since birth with the kind of people you knew, and the kind of home you had, because your parents were the kind of persons they are.

So it is of intense importance to you what kind of persons your parents were, even before you met them. It is to tell you this--or at least half of the story--that I am writing this book. It is to introduce you to a small boy, and a lad, and a young man, you never saw, yet through whom you received your life.

My mother, shortly before she died, sent me three little books in which are written poems I had composed since the age of seven years. They were intended to be seen by no one except myself. They contain the record of secret and personal thoughts during those growing years; pictures both of the world outside and the world within as viewed by my eyes, and set down by my hand in all but undecipherable handwriting, in my own verse.

After I left home, some of my verses appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. Some have been copied and recopied. Many of them, I discovered in after years, had been cherished by someone who had cut them out and treasured them.

All of these poems, from the earliest to the latest, I intend to copy for you, with an explanation of the picture each one calls up in my memory.

We are made up of our memories. Life is memory--the subconscious remembrance of the marvellous discoveries made in aeons past by the supreme Adventure of Being. We are kept alive from moment to moment because our

lungs remember how to breathe, and our hearts remember how to beat, and the blood and the mysterious chemical processes of our glands remember how to generate those wonder-working fluids which maintain the delicate balance of existence on the wafer-thin edge of nothingness.

If you lose your memory, by that much you lose yourself. If you forget your name, and your home, and cannot recall the meanings of words, nor the common acts of self-protection, you cease by so much to be a person, and become merely an object, a living lump.

Memory lost, all is lost. Conversely, therefore, memory enriched, all is enriched. A great Personality is one which from a well-stored memory can bring out instantly what is needed in any situation.

As you approach the End of the Road, you will find that the Garden of Memory is about all that is really your own. If to your individual memories, therefore, you add the knowledge of that prior existence you had in your parents, it will enrich your own field of consciousness with the light of other days.

The world is rediscovering poetry as a necessity of life. Poetry, in the sense of direct spiritual apprehension able to kindle a like fire in others, is not a matter of machinery or measurement. It is life speaking to life in contagious emotion conveyed by words, but not dependent on words. It is the unveiling of invisible splendors.

I am hoping your mother will do with her own poems what I propose to do with mine, perhaps adding such illustrations as she has drawn for so many of mine. Then you will have a mental picture of the little girl whom, also, you never saw, but who has given to each of you so rich an inheritance of beauty and of song. She has not written nearly so much verse as I have, but it is uniformly of a better and more lyric quality, and approaches things--naturally enough--from a different point of view.

Her specialty has been art, particularly as an illustrator of children's books; as mine was writing, particularly of headlines. In one thing we agree most profoundly, and we believe that all three of you have inherited that belief with your very existence; which is, that the quality of your life

depends entirely on the way you live it.

She was born in a covered wagon on the sun-baked Texas plains. Her mother says the temperature that day hovered around 117. I was born in a quiet, sedate rectory, under moss-hung oak trees, in a January when it snowed in that sleepy Southern town for the first time in over a decade. Not until I was 15 did snow fall again in the streets of Mobile, Alabama. Schools declared a holiday, and bankers dropped all business to pelt one another with the snowballs that came so seldom and disappeared so soon.

All three of you were born in Chicago; one on the North Side, one on the West Side, one on the South Side. It seems strange that people with such diverse beginnings should have met, and established a certain amount of liking.

With some of my songs you have been familiar since infancy. I have sung you to sleep with them, your funny, fuzzy little heads cuddling up to my neck, and your warm sweet breath tickling my ears, many and many a time. Some of them you have never seen before. Quite a number I had entirely forgotten until your grandmother sent me the books in which they were recorded.

As I read them over, vivid pictures are rekindled of a little boy who hardly seems myself. Year after year I have watched this small boy come back to life, through you; recognizing the very twists of speech and turns of thought which once were mine, mingled with other and more lovable characteristics you gained from your mother. So as you read, my boys, you will be living over your own lives in the previous incarnation of your father.

But in them you will find more than the sketch of a single life. Reading over these verses--some of them frankly doggerel, and proud of it--some of them aiming at "no middle flight"--you will catch gleams of successive world-conflagrations as reflected in one person's developing consciousness, as the glare of burning palaces may be reflected in the tiny windows of nearby cottages, however humble.

The Spanish war; Conquest of the Philippines; the Dreyfus case; budding imperialism; the Russo-Japanese war; the growing industrial struggle; World War 1; the Mad Decade; World War 2--all of these roar and blaze on

the horizon of the consciousness recorded in these verses, along with quite personal experiences and the normal progress of an old-fashioned and very incomplete education.

But what are these to you? My father used to fascinate us with stories of his own boyhood. It was not until near the end of his life, however, that we discovered how rich these experiences really had been, and how greatly privileged we were to share in the knowledge of them.

It is because these fragments meant so much to us, when we learned of them, that I am writing this for you. Nearly all the things that happened to me were set down in verse-form of some kind. Through these verse-forms I hope it will interest you to see how the world appeared, long before you were born, to the only person in the world who can claim the proud privilege of signing his letters to you

Dad

Rev. Irwin St. John Tucker

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

On the twentieth anniversary of our wedding, the Chicago Tribune published at the top of its Line-o'-Type column two sonnets written, as their titles imply, by your mother and me to each other. I put them here so that, while reading all the far-wandering nonsense which follows, you may look back at these and say: "So that is what all this leads up to"; and so saying, read on, content, knowing that of this deep and lasting love you were born.

ON A CERTAIN ANNIVERSARY
WIFE TO HUSBAND

How swift the sunlit morn of youth has flown!
  And all so strangely sudden and too soon
  Now we are come to plodding afternoon.
And yet it seems but yesterday, my own,
That you would deck my dusky hair, storm-blown
  About a face you called "a little moon
  That laughs through clouds"—and claim it for a boon
To find me flowery crowns, in fields unmown.

I see the twilight years come on, nor grieve,
  Because I know your gray and deep-set eyes,
That never learned to falter nor deceive,
  And now grown comrade-kind and lover-wise,
Hold still unchanged a laughing gypsy there,
With ghosts of long-fled poppies in her hair.

* * *

In return I wrote this sonnet, which practically dictated itself. The poem flowed smoothly and without a pause from the end of my pen.

HUSBAND TO WIFE

Autumn and afternoon draw swiftly on.
  Beyond them evening waits, and then the night,
  And winter, whose forgetful snow in white
Will seal with silence all the summer won.

Bright were the leaping fires our morning knew
And glorious green was springtime. But how soon
Mist-opals paled before the fire of noon,
And spring flowers fled while summer's hard crops grew.

Dear heart, why should we falter and look back?
Now comes the time of autumn's mellow rest
When melodies sound sweetest, and the blest
Ripe fruit of harvest smiles in bin and stack.
We need not fear the winter, nor the night;
Love gave us warmth, and love will give us light.

* * *

So to assemble the gang, we will put here the verse I wrote for a 'Boys Week' about that time, published in the Herald-Examiner. We've always called John Irwin "Barney", since he was a baby because of his deep throaty chuckle, which led a visitor to comment: "when he laughs, he googles."

On the day this appeared, Ernest's teacher read it to his class at Bell Grammar School. After school, he reported, one of the boys jeered at him because of it. He added matter-of-factly: "So I hit him."

THE OLD PACKING BOX

There's many a land where I've wanted to go
And many a wonder to see
Where colorful currents run thundering low
By coral and cinnamon tree.
But five are too many, and roads are too long,
And little feet falter and fall;
So here we are, tied to a dream and a song,
And a play by our own garden wall

There's a packing-box under our old apple-tree,
A marvellous thing to behold;
For it sails upon many a perilous sea,
And it's laden with mythical gold.
It's a fortress pale garrisons die to defend,
It's an ice-hut, where frozen gales howl;
It's an airship adrift out beyond the world's end,
And a cavern where jungle beasts prowl.

It's a maker of magic for my merry crew,
For Ernest, and Barney, and Dan,
And the wonderful pup that must tag along, too,
Such amazing adventures to scan.
With a lath for a sword, and a broom for an oar
And a telescope fashioned of air,
To the depths of the moon they will boldly explore,
Finding wonder and merriment there.

And though I should travel by tropical dawns
To palaces mirrored in mist,
Where orchards lean laughing to fabulous lawns
In fountain-gemmed gardens sun-kissed
I never can look with a thrill more divine,
Or visions more rapturous see,
Than this sturdy young crew of explorers of mine,
In their packing-box under the tree

CHAPTER 1

THE CHOSEN NATION

I WAS born in a rectory, torn down decades ago. It was a very old-fashioned house of wood, built in the style known as "carpenter's Gothic", with steeply slanted roof and high, narrow windows in the upstairs rooms. Originally designed in the form of a cross, it had been improved by the addition of other rooms as Father's family grew and grew.

There were ten children in that family altogether. Two of them died before I was born; but there were times when the surviving eight, five boys and three girls, with Father and Mother, were all there together; an impressive mob. I was Number Seven in the procession.

That rectory has been replaced with one of more modern construction; but the church, as I write, is still as it was in my childhood, except for the steeple, blown down in a hurricane and never replaced.

That church was the dominant factor in my early years. Through it, and through the rectory, flowed an endless stream of joy and sorrow, of worship and festival, of perplexity and pain. Constantly the organ echoed and the murmurous sound of many voices in psalm and prayer echoed under the great green arches of the live-oaks, festooned with moss, that stretched between our home and the House of God.

That ebbing, flowing tide of worship formed the background of all my early years. Its chants and prayers surged and rolled in a wordless diapason around us all, long before I

had learned to say the words or sing the hymns.

From the south side, morning and evening, the bright and cheery music of the orphans singing in the Girls Home echoed the deeper chorus of the congregation's singing to the north.

Time and again in these poems, especially those of the earliest pages, there are comments and references to this undercurrent of music.

"Around us swelled the grand harmonious roll
And choral thunder of the tuneful spheres . . ."

"Rapt in rare cathedral splendor
Swell rich hymns from many a choir."

"What hymns that storm the heavens in ecstasy divine
Through incensed arches ring.'

. . "And that great music held
Meanwhile her speech in largo grand and full
Like one I heard from deep-toned organ pealing
—Mayhap adream—through gloom rich-tint and rare"

On one of my early birthdays, the seventh or eighth, my mother gave me a book in which to write my verses. On the cover she inscribed:

"Not every man can be a poet,
More'n every sheep can be a goat."

I have that book now, and look over it chiefly with a vague wonderment that anybody's handwriting, even at that early age, could possibly be so bad.

Almost the first poem in this book is a hymn. My nurse, Mrs. Eliza Robertson, whom you may remember as "Ijy"—my original name for her—used to sing me to sleep with mournful hymns, such as "Alas, and did my Savior bleed, and did my sovereign die." Besides, I was the son of the rector, and knew all the funeral music. This colored the theme of my first hymn:

"HAST'NING HOME TO JESUS."

The days of sunshine are o'er
The days of darkness are come;
The threatening clouds seem to lower;
We must be hast'ning home.

Where our loved ones have gone,
  Where our dear ones have sped;
With a prayer of hope
  They left us on their dying bed.

CHORUS:

Hast'ning home to Jesus,
  Happy hearts we all.
Up in heaven with Jesus
  We no more shall feel death's thrall.

This lugubrious composition is the reflection of bitter experience. Mrs. Robertson's little girl, Lily—her only child—had died. Almost at the same time a boy with whom we played —Harry Beauchamp—died of pneumonia. And in the same period a tragic event filled us all with horror.

Mobile, like New Orleans, had inherited the old French custom of announcing deaths and funerals by pasting up on every electric light pole little handbills, each carrying a picture of a hearse, with enormous nodding black plumes on the four corners or above the heads of the horses. We children regarded these with superstitious terror, and none of us would have dared to touch them.

But a family named Moran from out of town moved into a house on the corner across from the church. There was a red-headed boy in that family, with a little sister whose name, I believe was Mamie. Little Mamie, seeing a bill-poster paste one of these funeral notices on a pole, climbed on a box and began to tear it down.

We watched, aghast, and told Jimmie, the brother; "Mamie is going to die; she tore down a death notice." He stood out stoutly against us at first, saying he didn't believe it; but the rest of us insisted, until he turned a ghastly pale under his red freckles; Mamie began to scream. He seized her hand and hurried her home, screaming.

Next week the Morans had moved. Mamie had died—of fear. We attributed it to the vengeance of unseen powers who struck the child down for daring to violate—even though unwittingly—the sanctity of the funeral notice. But now I know we other children really killed her—may God forgive us.

That funeral hymn was not the first in my book. The front page is taken up with what was apparently intended to be a narrative poem, with a remarkable attempt at dialect in the third stanza. It is called:

LOST AND FOUND

Lying on the dusty highway
  Slept a little child of three.
She had strayed from off the byway
  Where nurse was reading under a tree.

Looking for some luscious berry,
  Or for flowers rich and rare,
She had grown to be over-merry
  Till she was sleeping right down there.

Soon her nurse began to miss her;
  And she hunted all around.
She asked a man, who answered: "Yis, sir;
  "I saw her lying on the ground.

This heroic but futile attempt at a rhyme seems to have discouraged me. The next verse dies thus:

"She must have been asleep, dear miss,
 She lay so still and quiet."
"Oh, she must be dead . . ."

That was as far as I got. No one will ever know whether the frantic nurse found the little child of three, who had "grown to be over-merry" looking for flowers rich and rare. I can distinctly recall the deep feeling of creative sympathy that surged over me for that nurse, and the strong desire to comfort her by leading her to the sleeping child; but never —no never—could I find the rhyme that would do the trick.

There is another verse of this tragic era, probably about the time of the death of Harry Beauchamp, entitled "Little Edward."

> On a summer's evening the great church bell
> Tolled forth the solemn funeral knell
> Of little Edward, so young, so frail
> Who lay on the bier, all blanched and pale.

Up to the time I left Mobile, it was still the custom to toll the bell as the funeral cortege left the church. Death was inescapable; there was none of the modern custom of quiet, unobtrusive obsequies in chastely appointed "funeral homes." No one could mistake a cortege; nor could any one, not completely deaf, avoid the significance of the slow, melancholy boom of the knell.

Familiarity robbed death of its terrors. You will find many cheerful references to spirits "freed from the cramping body" among these juvenile rhymes.

But there was also a healthy epic strain among them. One such is a ballad entitled "The Fisherman's Daughter."

THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

They lived in a little cottage
  By the side of a river great.
Their food was fish and pottage.
  Ah, theirs was a happy fate

He went down to the river
  Each morning as it came.
One day he met a woman old,
  A most capacious dame.

"Why, then, good-morning, mother;
I hope you are well as you wish.
Will you come down to our cottage
And dine off milk, bread and fish?

"Though ours is a humble cottage,
Tis cozy, and better by far
Than most rich houses in cities
That must go just by the law."

"How is the fishing business?"
Then said the fisher ma.
"I know of a place just above here
Where the fishing is better by far.

"Good mother, show me the place then"
Said the fisherman, taking his nets.
They walked along the river;
"Here's your daughter, there she sits."

She pointed to a maiden
Who sat on the river-side,
With her arms around a young man,
Her lover, true and tried.

They loved each other dearly,
So they married, you may see clearly.

* * *

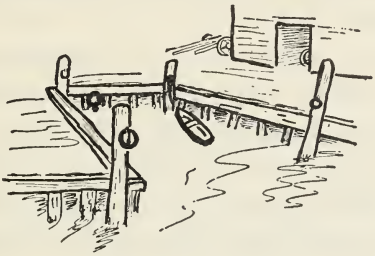
I have always admired this poem, not so much for its plot, which isn't very clear, nor for the delicate drawing of characters—for that seems to be lacking—but that one adjective in the second verse sets it apart from anything else I ever wrote —or for that matter, anything anybody else ever wrote.

"A most capacious dame."

Beat that, if you can, for a one-word novel.

It might occur to you that "by far" does not rhyme with "by the law." But in Mobile it did—still does. The thing that sticks in my memory most about coming North was the strange, ridiculous word used here—"Yes." I had never heard the expression; we always said "Ya-a-as."

In a seaport town, such as Mobile, fishing and fishermen form a staple topic of conversation, especially along the Eastern shore; and that brings me to the second dominant influence in my childhood—the Bay.



OVER THE BAY

If the sound of singing and the rolling tones of the organ laid the foundation of my memories, the sound of the waves on the beach of the Eastern shore built up much of the superstructure. In every year the Great Event was the packing up for the summer's trip Over the Bay.

Before we bought our own place, we rented a home for each summer along the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. It seems now to offer small basis for the elaborate pinnacles of fancy I built upon it. It is a shallow estuary, filled with mud by the seven rivers discharging into it all the top soil washed off the red clay farms of Alabama. The Western Shore is mostly swamp, as is the Northern end. Along the Eastern shore are tall red cliffs of clay at the Northern end, sinking to wide flat stretches of pine barrens at the southern half. But it was all I knew.

Magnificent old pre-war mansions stood in decaying grandeur along those curving beaches. At one time these had been filled with splendid mahogany and rosewood furniture, remnants of the days before the Civil War. Fragments of the shells fired by Farragut's fleet were used as door-stops in many of the homes that had felt the weight of war.

We used to hear stories from faded belles of the Confed-

eracy about the burying of family silver as the Yankee armies neared; stories of the desertion of former slaves; of dancing with Yankee officers, and smuggling bits of food and information gleaned from them to husbands, brothers and sweethearts, in hiding close by.

For many years, a pre-war home at Battles was the object of our hegira. During weeks before, we packed barrels and boxes and bales with household necessities. Then when the great day came, these were loaded on drays and hauled down to the wharf, to be loaded aboard the white-winged schooners of the Bon Secours oyster fleet which carried family and furnishings across the bay.

In later years we rented homes already furnished, and went across on the steamboat. In more recent days, after Father had bought the house you all know so well at Seacliff, we simply drove across, over the bridge or through the tunnel that now traverse the muddy, sluggish northern end of the Bay.

In a child's mind, a rag doll can be transformed by imagination into a baby with the face and disposition of an angel. So our childish fancy made of the piney woods and muddy waters of our summer home a very Paradise. In a great proportion of these poems the Eastern Shore forms the background of the drama, the panorama of water and sky supplying much of its action.

Distinctly I remember the moment when the first poem—well, let us call it that—of this life-long collection of shore-drift took form—the childish ballad "Captain Jim." You know it well; each of you was sung to sleep with it innumerable times.

With my playmate, Willie McCowan, I was walking on the beach at Battles, tawny waves breaking at our feet, the southwest wind ruffling our hair. My hair was cotton-white, his was fire-cracker red. Far on the edge of the horizon a schooner—one of the oyster fleet plying between Bon Secours and Mobile,

heeled its white sails over against the faint blue sky. I was waving a wooden sword, of the kind all boys make out of lath and splintered boxes. Willie had just expressed wonder about which of the mahogany-faced old sailors we knew was captain of the craft. I said: "Oh, let's call him Captain Jim", and then began chanting:

"O Captain Jim he took a swim"—

It is silly, senseless doggerel, of course; but I remembered it and scrawled it painfully down, the surge of creative joy taking possession of me. I was then about seven years old. So here is your old "Sleepy-song"—Captain Jim:

CAPTAIN JIM

O Captain Jim,
He took a swim
In the nice little bay, so he did;
And he said "Hark, hark,
I hear a shark"
And then he went and hid.

He commanded a crew
And a good boat, too;
Of mates there was only one.
To some of his crew
He said: "We will do
What nobody else has yet done."

He fought a fight
In dusky light
And won it, I'm glad to say;
He captured a boat,
The best afloat
And so he won the day.

The man he fought
Was a man of thought
Much given to books of lore.
He thought all day
Till the evening was gray
And then he thought some more.

So ends the gory romance of Captain Jim. My sneaking sympathies were always with "the man he fought, who was a man of thought, much given to books of lore." That was always my own failing; to think all day till the evening was gray, and then to think some more. I admired the man of action, Captain Jim, at a distance, so to speak, well aware that he was out of my class.

All my life, the memory of the visions built upon the somewhat commonplace scenery of the Eastern Shore dazzle the realization of what that scenery actually is. Time after time you will find such phrases as these:

"What is this song you sing, mysterious, low,
Eternal, O ye pines?—"

"Upon Montrose, while flamed departing day
Across storm-lurid waters wild and wide—"

"When the locust's song is silent, and great
peace is on the shore"

"Where red Montrose, frowning across the sea
Guards Daphne's peace above her reverie"—

"So faintly booms afar the sullen sea
While some forgotten storm still chafes the shore . . ."

Montrose and Daphne are two stations to the North of Seacliff; Fairhope and Battles are to the South.

Many other poems, written years later, bear the imprint of the beach, and the cliffs, and the eternal song of the long-leaf pines. Many of them reflect the incredible splendor of the sunsets which transfigured the cliffs and beach with colors that can not be depicted or described.

So between the church in town and the tawny-waved bay my early years were spent, both leaving an indelible impress on my mind; and, it seems, on yours also, although you can never see these places as I did.

You remember James Barrie tells how the impression of Thrums he gained from his mother's description of her birthplace could not be reconciled with the mean little Scottish town he found it to be. "Red Montrose, frowning across the sea" is only half-a-hill of red clay; the "sea" is so narrow at that point that from the top of Montrose one can easily make out the smoking chimneys of the town of Mobile.

But to a child, it was enchantment. It was the only wonderland I knew.

HURRICANES

Almost every year near the equinox a tropical storm blows up from the Caribbean Sea. For decades we spoke of the "October storm" of 1893. One heavy blow occurred on August 6, 1901, inflicting heavy damage, although the loss of life was not great. On the face of the cliff at Daphne I carved in clay a couchant lion, like that at Lucerne; and wrote this poem, called

"DE PROFUNDIS"

Almighty God of storms, in whose wide hand
  The thunder and the drunken whirlwind are,
Who givest to the hungry wave command,
  Ruling embattled tempest from afar;
    Wreak not on us Thy wrath, O mighty God;
      Mercy, O Lord!

Tossed foamwise by Thy ocean's heaving might,
  Far driven by Thy blast contemptuously,
We, feather-frail and puny in Thy sight
  Lift up in prayer our trembling hands to Thee.
    Spare Thou Thy servants, Lord, in terror pleading;
      Mercy, O God!

Although our pain have in Thy will no weight
  Light as the cloven worm's blind agony,
Yet do Thou by Thy Christ's compassion rate
  The merit of our wild despairing cry.
    He died to save, do Thou not slay, O Lord;
      Mercy, O God!

LIGHT AND CLOUDS

In many of these poems are references to blazing splendid light. It does not seem so attractive to picture heaven as a blaze of light, now when increasing electric illumination fills our cities with the torture of unending glare. Heaven, to us, would seem to require more of an occasional soft and restful gloom.

But in the years when these poems were written, night still meant darkness. Illumination was scanty and feeble. Arc-lights mitigated the gloom of city streets a little; but mostly night was much as it had been in the days of the Hebrews, the Romans and the Greeks. In those days Heaven was visualized as a condition in which is "no darkness at all." How that must hurt the eyes!

You boys cannot, I think, visualize living in a world without electricity, without radio, without automobiles, without phonographs; a world in which street-cars were pulled by mules, or even slower donkeys; when buggies, surreys and phaetons, drawn by horses, filled the streets; when communication was by mail or messenger; when there were steam engines and steamboats, but no motorboats and no airplanes.

Not having known of these things, we did not miss them. Each of these now-familiar contrivances came to us as an incredible miracle. Vividly do I remember the first telephone, the first automobile, the first electric car—"with fire flashing under the wheels", we were told in awed whispers by the first witnesses.

Even plumbing, in the town of my birth, was a rare luxury. There were no sewers. Surface rainwater and kitchen drainage flowed only into gutters which lined the streets; and these in summer were coated with a thick, rich, bright green scum.

Paving was of cedar blocks, which after a few years developed huge hollows and summits. But mostly the streets

were simply paved with dust, six inches deep, continually churned by winds and horses. Once in a while loads of oyster shells were spread over the dust. Until these were pounded and crushed by hoofs of horses and iron-shod wheels of the conveyances they drew, these streets were unsafe for barefoot children as well as wreaking damage upon every shoe. And how overpowering was their smell!

One of our great municipal sources of pride was the Old Shell Road, running along the bay for several miles south. This was kept in repair so that the paving of crushed lime from the oyster shells was fairly continuous. Its narrow ribbon of curving white was the Sheridan Road of our town.

For many years our home was illuminated by kerosene lamps. Then gas came in, then electricity.

But out in the backwoods, not many miles back, they used —and still use—the greaselamp—a pan of tallow drippings with a wick floating in it.

Old-fashioned homes retained candles as a mark of their antiquity. High was the honor conferred on visitors when tapers were lit in treasured old candle-lamps of cut glass.

But certainly, we were not oppressed by the night. Many a time, going from the house, lighted by smoky kerosene wicks, it seemed that the darkness was brighter than the light. There was a clean sweet brilliance even in dense shadow among the pine trees, so that, as soon as one's eyes grew accustomed to it, the house glare seemed obscurity.

"But deeper glory in that darkness dwells—"

"Then with a rush and roar and blinding light
That glory burst, which in the deeps of night
In darkness and in silence ever dwells . . ."

If you have seen the Bay ablaze with phosphorescence, you can understand it; if not, no amount of description will avail.

To swim in that gleaming glory, sometimes every night for weeks; to stand on a pier and watch the fish play below you, every slender darting body outlined in liquid flame; or to dive in that coruscating water and open your eyes beneath it, while the soft bodies of the glowing illuminati flowed past your face and between your fingers, was an experience only to be shared, not described.

Clear to my memory are the easy triumphs of the Fish Jubilee: the long-drawn Battle of the Bay, when green water pouring in from the Gulf in the long dry season drove back the brown tides from the landward side; the bonfires sending up leaping cascades of sparks and pungent smoke against the calm far-off splendor of Scorpio and Sagittarius—these things are engraved deeply in recollection; but I can find no words that can call up in your minds the sights, and sounds, and fragrances and well-remembered feeling of the fellowship of boy with bay, out of which these poems arose.

"Breezes warm-winged, laden with breath of honey
Drove and plumed melodious seas caressing
Thy shores, O Daphne!"

"Purer through the misty air
Flamed spirits, one and many. In their trail
Streamed as they passed bright gold, that sparkling blazed
And died upon the palpitating light . . ."

An old side-wheeler, the Heroine, which had run the blockade of Farragut's fleet during the Civil War, to get cotton out and munitions of war in to aid the crumbling Confederacy, carried daily toilers back and forth to town. It was a low craft, immensely long, it seemed to us, and rakish in comparison with the fat-bellied excursion steamers of later date, like the James A. Carney or the Pleasure Bay.

We looked on the Heroine as something like its name, a living creature, tossing long black tresses of fat-pine smoke as she sped up and down along the shoreline. For travel and sport along the shore we used sailboats or rowboats. Motor boats had not yet profaned the water with scum and the air with stench.

One summer Father got a six oared yawl. It was splendid fun that summer to start off for the long wharf at Battles, with one of the boys at every thwart; even I was allowed to struggle with an oar, and not badly for my size. "Pull!—ship oars" (as we passed through the pilings of one of the long wharves—"Give way!"

Moog's store at Battles was the focal trading point of all the local pine-woods dwellers. Few of them could read, and all chewed tobacco. We boys, and many of the girls, went barefoot all summer. To walk in Moog's store meant to step where tobacco chewers had been spitting freely.

Moog, as postmaster, opened the mailbag and read aloud the names of all those to whom letters were addressed. I visualize that distribution clearly—a double ring of faces, all the hue of tanned leather; the men and women's faces above —every man with a three-days' growth of beard, every woman with a blue sunbonnet;—and below them a ring of children's faces;—all eyes fixed intently on the bearded postmaster in the glare of his hanging kerosene lamp, as he called the names of lucky recipients of mail. When some proudly answered,

he flung it deftly to them. Many came every day for years and never got even a postcard. But they knew with great accuracy who did get letters, and how often.

Razor back hogs in every roadway; cows wandering down the roads—every road consisting of three deep ruts, two for wheels, one for horses;—and the roadways cleft at intervals by streams ice-cold in the middle of summer, and piercingly sweet from the broad-bladed fragrant water plants that filled their depths with opalescent jewels . . .

Our sailboats adventured up and down that shoreline at the pleasure of the southwest wind. Our eldest brother Gardiner, after his ordination, was in charge of a string of missions from Citronelle, a winter resort town for Northern visitors, to Bon Secours, an old French settlement of fishermen within sound of the Gulf surf. Its streets were all rivers.

In his little sailboat Gardiner would start off in all weathers, sometime taking two weeks on one of his missionary trips. Occasionally I went with him, counting it a climax when we plunged into salt surf along the glaring sands of the Gulf. It seemed then so immeasurably far. Now one can drive from Mobile to the Gulf in a couple of hours, take a surf bath, and drive back home. But not then.

The backwoods seemed terrifying country. My territory was the shoreline. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that at one time I knew and loved, with a deep individual affection, every pine tree that waved its evergreen arms and chanted majestically in the sea-born breeze.

> Tall thy red cliffs front upon tumbling waters,
> Crowned with dark pines, mystical litanies chanting,
> Deep, like harp-strings chorded by wondering fingers
> Borne on the sea-winds.

FLOWERS

Until I had been away from Mobile a long time, and returned, I had not realized how it is steeped in rich perfume of endless flowers . . . Roses that bloom all winter; vast cascading masses of wistaria; azaleas and japonica and cape jessamine (now called gardenia), towering magnolia grandiflora trees with huge white chalice-like blossoms; magnolia frascati, tiny yellow nubbins of sweetness;—the catalog is endless. The Azalea Trail has made the town notable of late years, and the Bellingrath Gardens are world famous.

In the long epic poem "The Chosen Nation" I placed, before the Throne of Humanity, an altar on which were heaped the choicest flowers of all the world—

> "There lay the bell
> Of fairy morning glory, gemmed with dew;
> Magnolia, with corroding touch that dies,
> Fragrant in purity; the soft disdain
> Of virgin-bower, with her own perfume drunken,
> Drooping in languid wistfulness aside;
> Azalea, and crepe myrtle, and wild rose . . ."

And another on much the same theme is perhaps appropriate here—

> There is a message in these flowers
> That if I could I'd bring you,
> From all the wide world's blossoming bowers,
> Whole tribes like these to fling you;—
>
> First, Virgin-bower with drooping head,
> Where honey-bees long linger;
> Flame-lilies, tawny-bright and red,
> Tiptoe, with upraised finger;
> Japonica, and jasmine pale,
> Gold prickly-pear, all thorny;
> And bridal wreath, so starry frail,
> And yucca, waxed and horny.

Then honeysuckle, blinding sweet;
  Azalea, and crepe-myrtle,
Scattering lace blossoms at your feet;
  Veiled-nun, in snowy kirtle;
Geranium should with salvia twine,
  Wood-violets with field-lilies,
The peony with the trumpet-vine,
  Roses with daffodillies.

From western sky-flung palisades
  The bitter-root, brightly humble;
And gentians, plucked where wild cascades
  Down fearful canyons tumble;
Anemones, where field-larks sang;
  And daisies, brown and yellow;
Then sage-brush gray, with haunting tang
  Of lemon-sweetness mellow.

Cape Jessamines in stately pride,
  Carnations in their laughter,
Sweet-peas and violets that hide
  The more to be sought after.
Magnolias, blooming nearest God;
  Poppies, of dreaming fancies;
With crocuses and golden-rod
  And black-and-purple pansies.

These flowery hosts in thought I bring,
  With all their bright completeness;
Lay at your feet each fragrant thing,—
  To thank you for your sweetness!

* * *

SCHOOL DAYS

School in that town was a matter of books and blackboards —nothing else. We had no playground, except an overcrowded patch of cinders. There were no lockers, no manual training, no gymnasium, no shower baths, no inside plumbing. There was a laboratory of physics equipment, but we never

used it; kept always behind locked glass doors, it was there only to be wondered at from a distance.

When I left the town, we presented to the high school a collection of rare and interesting things—geological specimens, coral, seashells, minie-balls, bayonets and rifles from the Civil War times;—but the school never displayed these, never even sent us a letter of thanks.

Education as I knew it was deadly dull. We took no trips, collected no specimens and only once did we have a football team. In playing center on that team I received the badly wrenched back that every little while still floors me.

One of these schoolday verses illustrates a spirit of fearlessness in rhyme—the final line illuminates the whole poem backward—

VACATION

It is vacation! It is vacation!
Come out, comrades, with expectation.
Come to the woods, the sea, the shore,
And think about your books no more.

Forget your lessons, forget your books,
Forget your teacher's angry looks;
But seek the woods, come to the shore
And think of the pleasure that is in store.

Come to the beach and find some shells;
Come to the beckoning woods and dells;
Come to the sea, and take a bath,
And think no harm, and think no scath!

"Think no scath!" A masterpiece, no less! That was written somewhere about the fifth grade.

I was cursed with an ungovernable temper, so much so that my elder brothers called me "The War-Cub." My father more

than once took a leather strap to convince me of the error of this way. I shall never forget the great discovery made one day while he was thrashing me—and hard—for some such outburst. I caught sight of my own face in a mirror, and thereafter became so much interested in watching my own expression of simulated agony as the strap fell across my back that I quite forgot its sting. After father had gone I rubbed the welts it made across my skin, and meditated with delight on the fact that one can make poetry out of pain. So was generated this gem—

SPEAK KINDLY

Never speak harshly
To kith or to kin;
For a word spoken harshly
May lead them to sin.

Always speak kindly
To every one here;
For a word spoken kindly
Will drive away fear.

Always be gentle
To friend and to foe;
If not, 'twill cause mental
And eternal woe.

In our schools, the girls and boys were kept entirely separate, in distinct departments, from primary through high school. A great stir was made all over the South when the first co-eds went to college along with the men.

There was a sort of romance attaching to the girls' side of the old Barton Academy, which in 1936 kept its 100th anniversary. It was a great adventure for the boys to climb up on one another's shoulders and look over the high board fence which separated our playground from that of the girls, although we paid those same girls very small attention when we passed them on the street immediately after school.

This doggerel doesn't mean anything except against that atmosphere of separation—

A LITTLE RULE

To the scholars in school
I'll give this little rule;
  When the bell rings, always be quiet.
Till in sounds for recess,
Be all quietness,
  Or else there will sure be a riot.

From experience
This comes, and so hence
  You'll find you'll do well to obey it.
If not, you will rue
When I set it down true
  If you don't do it just as I say it.

After a while
When I see my girl smile
  I'll go nearly crazy, you bet.
If she gives me a kiss
I'll go mad with bliss
  —But she hasn't gone quite so far yet.

MUSIC

At about the age of 12 I had a tremendous voice and no sense of tune. The superintendent of the Sunday school used to say that I would be a great help if I ever struck the right note. It makes me chuckle when I hear comments on the enormous lung-power you boys, particularly Barney, exhibit now. You came by it honestly.

But though I could not sing and never learned to play except haltingly, I loved music with a great intensity. Brothers and sisters all had their musical instruments; Gardiner the guitar, Ernest the violin, Irene the piano, Royal the flute; and after me came Melville, with her heaven-sent voice and violin; Edith, also with a flute. Cyril took his sense of melody out in

architecture—frozen music—but at college he was drum-major in the University band. I was left out of those family concerts I remember so well, when we all sat on the front porch, under cascading wisteria, playing and singing in chorus and ensemble.

Three large frogs seemed to love music; for on such occasions they invariably came out and hopped solemnly up and down the garden walk as long as the music continued.

I took out my sense of exclusion from this musical setting in sublimated scorn. One of these teen-age poems begins—

> "I dream not on the moanful violin,
> Nor on the cool-voiced flute make liquid throb,
> Nor pulse upon the thunderous harpsichord."

My brother Ernest began to lose his sight about the time I was 12. He could not read; so sat alone for hours and hours, playing on violin or 'cello the most heart-rending music I ever heard—composing it in the growing darkness of his sight. Listening entranced, many a time, I would see Mother sitting with tears running down her face. Ernest's sight was restored by an osteopath, which led him to embrace that profession. One reflection of that experience is:

> "As when some golden-tongued violin
> Showers like healing balm into our ears
> A dreaming ecstasy . . ."

* * *

CLOUDS

On the broad, flat side-roof of the church and on the sharper incline of the old Chapter-House roof, it was possible to lie concealed for hours at a time and gaze at the clouds, in long afternoons when the westering sun painted them in gorgeous hues. The Negro cook in the home of the chief of police, next door used to say: "There goes that boy, looking for the Lord to come down." It was true; I took very seriously

that Scriptural phrase: "A cloud received him out of their sight . . . He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

On the Eastern shore, clouds were constant companions and guides. They told of coming storm; they indicated the direction of the wind; they tempered the fierce heat of the noonday sun; they brought cool rains, washing atmosphere and ground and trees into fresh fragrant cleanness. Most of all they spread banners of splendor as the sun arose and shed glory upon the departing day.

Many of these poems reflect hours of meditation on the clouds, as I lay on the roof, or on the end of the long wharf, concealed from prying eyes.

One summer night in Daphne, the southwest wind rolled a huge cumulus slowly across the face of the full moon. Hidden behind it, the orb infused it with light, and sent its splendor across all the rest of the sky.

That picture is recalled in the description of the Throne of Humanity, in the Chosen Nation:

> "So hangs a cloud
> Instinct with summer lightning, lone afilm
> Across the piercing moon; while else the sky,
> Tinged with that hidden radiance, like new love
> Resplendent shines, with glittering gold inveined . . ."

Or that passage from The Commission—

> "I watched wind-driven clouds, in wild array,
> —Fantastic forms with bearing full of pride—
> Across the sky in weird procession ride . . ."

Or, in The Drama, a picture of sunset—

> "I saw the Sun grow dim
> When his cloud-warriors, whelmed by shattering powers,
> Fell bloodily along the westward rim,
> While swiftly from the East, surrounding him
> Swept the triumphant Hours."

My mother's smiling reproach had much truth in it; "There he goes, with his head in the clouds." They are not all blown away, even yet.

There is a collection of Judgment Day poems appearing in my scribbled note-books about this time. The Millenial Dawn prophets were stamping and shouting through the country with their predictions of the end of the world. There are always such prophets, but this was the first time I had come into contact with them.

> Lo, Azrael, Angel of the Sword, unsheathes his Sword of Flame,
> For the wrath of God is coming, as once before it came.
> Before, He sent the Deluge; but now He sends the Fire—
> Beware, beware, ye men of sin, the vengeance of God's ire!
>
> Men, cry aloud for pity! The Night of Fear is nigh,
> When red destruction flaming shall light up all the sky.
> When all the works of man before the Wrath of God shall fall,
> When deep foundations of the earth shall melt, and whelm us all.

That was built on the prophecy of St. Peter, that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat;—which, as I write, looks very much like a description of the destruction of the earth by atom bombs.

From Mobile to the Gulf a ship channel is dredged to allow ocean going traffic to reach the port. Constant labor is necessary to keep this narrow channel clear of mud poured into the Bay by the seven rivers. A row of channel-lights marks the way. Any ship disregarding these channel-lights goes aground in the soft mud, and needs must be hauled out again by tug-boats.

From the edge of Seacliff we watched these channel-lights twinkle out as dusk fell, to glow all night. One summer when my sister Melville was away, I wrote her this song:

> CHANNEL LIGHTS
> Across the winking channel-lights
> Now trailing rain droops low,
> While down the tide of yesternights
> Dim fleets of memory go.

I hear the darkness singing—
  The wavelets trill it, too—
From sea-world wonders bringing
  A melody of you.

Send back the beauty that is gone
  From cloud and sky and sea,
For there's no brightness in the sun
  With you away from me.
The gulls wheel slow in sorrow,
  With plaintive cries, and low;
From dusk to each tomorrow
  They look—and long—for you.

Twilight, and no moon, with a southwest wind blowing across the phosphorescent waves, is the picture recalled by this:

NEVER NEVER

In the Land of Never-Never
  Every purple cloud hangs low;
Velvet breezes, sweet as honey
  With the breath of jasmine blow;
Darkling thickets croon and murmur
  With the strange deep things they know.

On the shores of Never-Never
  Ah, what dreams come sailing by,
White on roaring tides of sapphire,
  Richly laden from the sky,
While the stars gleam warm and solemn
  Over blue hills, strangely nigh.

In the groves of Never-Never
  While far sunset fades to night,
Dwells a magic that can sever
  Chains of time with sword of might;
Hopes we thought were dead forever
  Live again in quickening light.

Surrounding the house at Seacliff are tall long-leaf pines, towering 60 and 70 feet. From babyhood I listened entranced to their perpetual chanting. This sonnet bears the date of 1901.

SONG OF THE PINES

What is this song you sing, mysterious, low,
  Eternal, O ye pines? Whether at morn,
  When all the world to see a new day born
Lies hushed, expectant, in the dewy glow;
Or when in noonday rest the meadows lie,
  Breathing soft silken odors from the ground,
    Yet ye your sobbing minor note intrude,
    And fill with cadence sad the gloomy wood,
  Ringing with weary wistfulness around,
As in a requiem for bright days gone by.
Or when the golden melancholy eve
Glooms on the land, your somber shadows grieve.
  What wild heart-haunting agonies constrain
  Your quivering voices to such endless pain?

Of all sounds of the Eastern Shore, the drowsy plunge of waves on the beach is most constant and all pervading. This was written after visiting a little cemetery, not far from the water's edge.

SLEEP

When the purple night is falling, and the golden day is o'er,
And the locust's song is silent, and great peace is on the shore,
Then the liquid lip-lip-lipping of the wavelets on the sand
Is the timeless voice of Ocean murmuring dream-songs to the land,
    Murmuring "sleep;
    Sleep . . . Sleep."

As a mother soothes her baby fast to sleep upon her breast,
Soothes her little wearied infant with sweet songs, and low, to rest
So old Ocean, folding fast the slumbering Earth within her arms,
Bids her children thus dream sweetly, slumbering softly, free from harms
    While she sings;
    Sings of sleep.

So may we, when Night is falling, and the long, long day is o'er,
When we sink in the arms of death to sleep, to sleep and wake no more

May we rest, lulled by the dream-songs of the Ocean singing low,
Singing on through years unending, singing not of pain nor woe,
But of sleep;
While we sleep.

* * *

FIRE

Father, in addition to being the rector of St. John's Church and literary editor of the Register, was chaplain of the fire department, the police department, the railroad shops, the Travellers Protective Association, the Actors Church Alliance and many other organizations. In those day the Fire Department, particularly the volunteer fire associations which helped in emergencies, were the glorious aristocracy.

In a town built mainly of wood, and lacking all water-pressure, fire-fighters were the first line of defense. We idolized them. On Firemen's Day all the companies had a great parade. Everybody turned out to watch it and to cheer for favored companies. It was a great honor to be allowed to help haul one of those Fire Parade floats by hand-ropes.

Those were the days when fire-engines really spouted fire and dense black smoke, and were drawn to the conflagration by galloping horses. That was a difficulty; the horses could not be allowed to march in parade; they could not be slowed down to a walk. So we sweated and tugged and cheered when No. 11 or No. 9 or No. 7 marched by in the glory of red shirts and shovel-tailed hats, axes and ropes on their shoulders, followed by the engine, gaily decorated with imitation flames. Often we shuddered in school debates over what would happen if a fire really broke out during the parade—with the horses back in their stalls and the engines blockaded by the crowded streets.

It is a wonder fires were not more common. Every house used kerosene lamps, wood or coal stoves, and open grates. Christmas trees in my childhood were illuminated by thousands of real candles, held upon the boughs by little metal clasps, and burning amidst the cotton flakes representing snow. Every year one read of terrible holocausts caused by these desperately dangerous Christmas decorations.

Even to this day Christmas in the South is the time of fireworks. Roman candles and sky-rockets left trails of bright sparks criss-crossing across the sky, falling on roofs of house and shed with reckless abandon. To make it worse, almost every Christmas the fire-forces were toasted and made recipients of generous gifts of punch. Yet so far as I know we had in my town no Christmas horror of fire and death.

Indicating this constant preoccupation with the possibility or the reality of fire is a poem called "The Fire-Fiend." It had a queer history. My brother Royal one year was editor of the literary magazine issued at the University of the South, at Sewanee, Tenn. He published this poem in that magazine, although I was not then a student, and as it turned out never did become one. He was severely criticized for making the periodical a "Tuckerzine." The incident had the further bad effect of puffing up still further my conceit, already substantial enough.

My brother Ernest, who was a collegian, undertook to subject the poem to literary criticism. He said:

"Now let us analyze this. You can conceive of the Fire-Fiend in two ways; one as lying in the bottom of the grate among the coals, blowing up the flames out of his mouth. The other way would be dancing in the flames, jumping up and down."

But I uttered scornful snorts, and said:

"This is a real Fire-FIEND! He burns up PEOPLE! He burns up WHOLE TOWNS!"

So here is the poem:

THE FIRE FIEND

I loudly scream and I fiercely dance
In the Fire!—the Fire!
The roaring flame is my garment's glance
—The Fire!—The Fire!
As my heat grows great till the strong man dies,
And my voice outyells his dying cries
I exult in my might, which his strength defies—
For I am THE FIRE!

My dusky hair streams abroad on the blast—
The smoke of the fire;
Like rain from the sky my sparks fall fast
To spread the fire.
The winds extend my red domain
While sweating men with might and main
Struggle to save their all—in vain,
For I am THE FIRE!

Their smoking corpses soon lie dead
From the wrath of the Fire;
The vast crowds shriek and run in dread
Away from the Fire;
My flames stay not, but sweep along,
And sleepers, waked by the sounding gong
Are dead ere they know from my terrible song
That I am the FIRE!

* * *

THE SPANISH WAR

In 1898 came the Spanish War, with the entrance of our country into world conquest and world politics. I remember the morning when headlines blazed "BATTLESHIP MAINE BLOWN UP IN HAVANA HARBOR." Across every blackboard in school that day were scrawled the words "Remember the Maine!"

Richmond Pearson Hobson, who sank the Merrimac at the entrance to Santiago Harbor, thus bottling up the Spanish fleet,

was an Alabama boy. On the morning after that exploit, we went wild, forming in parades and shouting "Hurrah for Hobson!" in endless cadences. When on the morning of May 1 Admiral Dewey sank the whole Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, the town held holiday.

The Spanish empire, rotten at the heart, crumpled up like a deflated balloon. Europe looked on, amazed and stunned. We who were just beginning the study of history went around swelling with new national importance.

Mobile was one of the ports heavily used in sending our forces to Cuba. In the pine-trees back of Mobile the 11th U. S. Cavalry camped on its way down. I remember the morning the troopers got off the train and rode out Government street. The regiment had just been moved from Wyoming; and the air of amazement on the faces of the cavalrymen as they looked at the live-oak trees which then, as now, embowered that wide street for miles; as they savored the fragrance left by endless generations of flowers, was something to behold. I trotted along with the cavalry, three miles, out to their camping ground, and watched them drive their bayonets into the ground to mark the alignment for their dog-tents. Day after day, as soon as school was over I struck out for the cavalry camp, making friends particularly with the men of H company.

MY ARSENAL

Between the back of the church and the wooden fence which ran close to it was a narrow space I called my Arsenal. There was just barely room for a slim boy to squeeze between a

corner buttress and this fence. Once inside, the space widened out, and I was safe from intruders.

In this Arsenal I kept my collection of weapons—swords, guns, spears, shields, helmets—made of scraps of tin and wood. Slingshots made after the manner of David—a leather apron with two strings attached—I could use with such proficiency that once rehearsing the battle with Goliath, I slung a half brick through the window of the Chief of Police from a distance of nearly 100 feet.

At a very early age I was presented at Christmas time with a real brass helmet, a tin shield and a lance with a wooden gilded tip. These came from some stage outfitters. To the small boys of my gang, they set me apart in an aura of chivalry.

As I grew older, catapults made after the fashion of the Roman weapons joined this array. Once in the woods of Baldwin County I found the rusted barrel of an old percussion-cap rifle dropped by some hunter, perhaps half a century before. With this we rigged up a small cannon, mounted on a block of wood, and on Christmas would load it with gunpowder, ram down slugs and bolts, and create a terrific uproar. Why it never exploded and killed a half dozen of us I do not yet understand. It nearly drove Mother crazy.

Dearest of all these weapons was a sword, made of heart pine, very tough, and susceptible of a surprisingly sharp edge. With it I developed considerable skill in lopping off from thicket or bush any given leaf without disturbing the rest. I carried this sword strapped to my side, every summer for more than three years.

Later, the sword was replaced with a half-sized axe. This I wore all summer in place of the sword.

Many a time one-man battles were staged in the churchyard, hotly contested on both sides. Weapons arranged in opposing ranks lay ready to hand. First I was the invader, and charged with a wooden musket; then swiftly leaped to the

defense from behind a tree, brandishing my sword. Onslaught and retreat, rally and surrender, were all enacted, with but one actor and a multitude of props. My sword was the leading character.

So when the Spanish War brought into reality the dim history of conflict as envisioned in many a book, this wooden sword became the hero, magnified into glittering steel. Swinging it wildly about my head, I composed—

THE SONG OF THE SOLDIER'S SWORD

I am swift, I am keen as the lightning's sheen,
And I flash in the air as I turn.
I drink deep of blood in the crimson flood
Of gore, and the foemen learn
To shrink from beneath the terrible wreath
Of light from my circling blade.
With the cannon's crash and the horseman's dash
Many bones in the grave have I laid.

I am swung on high and my gleaming eye
Is bright where the dead lie thickest.
In the cheering rush and the shouting crush
I am ever at the head of the quickest
Who leap to the fight, and stand in their might
That beats back the foe where he charges;
Neath my lightning thrust he soon bites the dust,
—And the ring of my slain enlarges.

Now this was the "kid stuff" reaction. But after knowing some of the regulars in the cavalry, and after the horror that lies behind conflict became more evident, I wrote this:

THE BATTLE

The cannon roared, the powder flashed,
The shells flew lightning swift
And carried death on every side;—
Ah, war is a demon's gift!
Charge upon charge—death upon death—
With rank and column swaying,
And wounded men on every side,
No hand their thirst allaying.

An officer, both young and bold
  With sword swung up on high
Burst from the ranks, and galloped forth
  With death-light in his eye;
"Charge, charge, my men!" he cried aloud;
  And drive the foemen back;—
Show them they cannot conquer us!"

  Into his horse's track
Headlong he fell, and in his breast
  Was a bloody gash and wide;
But his men swept on; none could withstand
  That mighty human tide.
The battle won for him alone—
  Then bitterest tears were shed;
For he that gave his life for us
  And liberty, was dead!

This is given here to show how the first glimpse of the "other side of war" was reflected in these kid verses. Here is another such contrast. The first was written the day after the victory at Manila Bay:

THE BATTLE OF MANILA BAY

Hail, great Dewey! Hail to thee
Who showed America to be
The destined ruler of all lands,
With but to issue her commands
To be obeyed; who did defeat
All-haughty Spain's much-boasted fleet.

Once more, all hail; all hail again,
O thrice-brave leader of brave men!
To thee our nation offers praise,
Wealth, luxury, and ease of days.
All that a nation well may give
We offer thee;—look, and receive!

The "other side of the story" resulted from a newspaper account by one of the boys who were stoking the furnaces of

Admiral Schley's flagship, during the spectacular race after the doomed Spanish squadron; "We done all the work, but we never saw nothing."

After that victory came a violent and disgraceful dispute as to whether Schley or Admiral Sampson, his superior, was entitled to the thanks of Congress for that victory. Schley sent a cablegram with the famous words "There's glory enough for all." So I added a laurel for the coal passers.

THE COAL PASSERS

The throb of the mighty engines
  That drive the great ships along
Have never been sung by a poet,
  And never recited in song.

The blood of the brave flowing deeply
  It has been their one aim to extol;
But no one remembers that, deep in the ship,
  The passers are passing the coal.

The cannon pour deep-throated thunder,
  Torpedoes roar now and again,
While spars topple, sway, and crash down to the spray,
  The bullets and shells fall like rain.

But though in the midst of this tumult
  No sounds save the hissing of steam,
The pounding and clank of the pistons
  The groanings and creaks of each beam—

No sounds reach the ears of the passers
  Save perhaps when a shell bursting through
Explodes in their midst and increases the list
  That shows what hell-furies can do!

HISTORY-MAD

One ill effect followed from the fact that father, as literary editor, received enormous quantities of books, which lined the study walls rank on rank from floor to ceiling. That was the

obsession with books, particularly history books, that colored all my youthful years.

Ridpath's History of the World, with its matchless illustrations, was my chief delight. Coming home after school, instead of playing baseball or cops and robbers like any normal boy, I would fling myself into an easy chair or a hammock and follow with accustomed eyes the adventures of Alcibiades or Asshurbani-Pal. I read incessantly, so much that mother would ask, frequently, in a worried voice;—"Don't you want to go out and play?"

On my paper route I strode along, hurling tightly-twisted copies of the afternoon newspaper into doorway and upper porch, chanting to myself:

> "For there imperial Rome
> In living grandeur sat; with mystic eyes
> Dreamed immemorial Egypt; aye, and there
> More ancient crowns than mind of man may tell
> With strange barbaric faces; in their eyes
> Slept awful centuries of hoary eld.
> Surely about their gold-encinctured brows
> Hung rolling mists agleam; and their huge names
> Smote vague on my uncomprehending ear" . . .

All this was about the age 13. An unhealthy preoccupation, perhaps. But it led to the observation of all these developments of American history "sub specie aeternitatis." Out of this came my epic poem "The Chosen Nation" which grew and grew from small beginnings. Into its treasured lines went all the "texture of sunshine, wind and rain" of bay and clouds and summer woods. After first it was called "Shasteid"—in imitation of Iliad and Aeneid, because the scene was laid on Mount Shasta, which at that time I had not seen. In many ways the original blank-verse form of this far surpasses the Spenserian stanza form of later years.

Concerning this there is a story. I threw away and quite destroyed this original blank verse form, in disgust at the

way our national affairs were developing. Then, more than thirty years after they originally were written, they sprang out of the forgetfulness of three decades, in their original form.

There was a reason. From time to time, in their composition, a hot, tingling wind would seize hold of me and wrap me in a kind of sparkling cloud. These lines then wrote themselves, pouring out of the subconscious like lava congealing into a sort of crystal-line rock.

Such passages as this, for instance:

> "That knowledge like a sea
> Presses upon my life beyond poor speech;
> And in that joy, of elder sorrow born,
> Lies pain again, star-eyed, and full of peace . . ."

Out of this reading of history a strong sense of vocation developed, as our country swiftly took the center of the world stage.

It seemed to me necessary that this nation should have its poetic voice—as Greece and England had. Deliberately and very early I set myself to be that poet. In Ralph Waldo Emerson's works I read that the lyric poet may feast and drink deep, but the epic poet must be content with the shepherd's bowl of milk. So I fashioned myself, as far as I could, to that severe model. It was evident that our country's poetic voice had not yet spoken. Night after night I swung down Government street to the YMCA, where an amazing man—A. C. Harte—as general secretary, had begun building a wonderful library of real books; and I read Spenser, and Milton, and Keats; Shakespeare; histories of English and Greek and Latin literature; filling my head full of shapes and visions immortalized in song.

Great poetic outbursts have always accompanied the entry of the nation from which they sprang into the world currents. David's songs marked the emergence of the Hebrews from slavery under the Philistines to national self-sonsciousness; the

poetic dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides followed Marathon; Shakespeare and the Elizabethans arose when the Spanish Armada was sunk, and England laid hold on the New World. Should not America, greater than they, speak with a voice as much more melodious?

In one of these copy-books I find this fragment;

> Of all that god-loved Hellas had of old
> That yet endures, thou hast as full a share,
> America! Olympus' thunders reach
> And crown thee; Marathon is all thine own . . ."

That hope burned deep and long. Out of it grew innumerable attempts and expressions, all converging on the one aim; to be worthy of the greatness of the age whose dawn smote across the world with unbelievable light.

So thinking over this, once in that high-ceilinged bedroom with the tall, narrow lancet window, looking out under green arches of live-oak trees to the illumined rose-window of the church where the choir was rehearsing for its Sunday music to the thunder and thrill of the organ, I wrote:

A MAN OF SONG

Plea for an American Poet

For long the world has waited for a man—
A Man of Song, whose fierce imperious hand
Shall brush aside the boundaries of all speech;
Rout with a breath these modern warblers all
Who desecrate the sacred name of Poet;
But with mere silken cobwebs do profane
That sanctuary where the ear attuned
May hold communion with the invisible world;
And whose wide voice and thunderous utterances
Resounding through the deeps of earth and sky
Shall fill the hearts of men with answering chords;
And in whose words shall sweep the breath of heaven
The pure ethereal essence of the skies,
While folk amaze, beholding such a god,
A living fire, encased in human clay;—

Who shall exalt the life of common men
Into a sacred atmosphere, and spread
A halo round plebian things of earth;
Whose strong, clean breath, like storm-winds, shall disperse
These choking fumes of noxious incense burnt
Before the sensual shrine of atheist gods.
That chattering host proclaims the regal Sun,
And late one like the morning-star arose.
When shall the light-born Lord of Life appear?

By the "morning star" I meant Rudyard Kipling. In those days Kipling was at his zenith. His Recessional and his White Man's Burden had just appeared; his stories swept the country. But Kipling was not an epic poet. Short flights were all he could essay.

So deep in the brain of this funny white-haired boy, with odd secretive ways and very few friends, crept and whispered a haunting ghost of great things to be and to become; the hope that in time he might be worthy to speak for our country the inmost truth of her great soul.

That hope burned deep and long. Out of it grew innumerable attempts and expressions. When I left home, at the age of 16, the purpose had developed of a series of long poems describing the differing traditions of different sections. Some of these were completed.

One was Bienville's Vision, depicting the landing of Bienville, who founded the city of Mobile in 1702, as first capital of Louisiana. One was the City of Dreams, describing the Carnival of New Orleans. Then there was the Song of the Alamo; but the main one was the Chosen Nation—the name which succeeded that original fantastic title The Shasteid.

So while you read these poems, think of yourselves in me; think of a small boy with great hopes, with high sense of the poetic calling; striving by reading, and meditating, and strict abstention from sports and amusements of most lads, to make himself worthy of being an epic poet.

Echoes of the violent political struggles of those days penetrated but faintly under the green caverns of the live oak trees in the church yard. Dimly I remember the victory of Cleveland over Hancock—because the Mobile Register ran a border of exultantly crowing roosters all around the front page to announce the victory of the Democrats. That was in 1892; I was just six years old. Much more vividly comes the picture of 1896—the torchlight parade of Bryan's supporters marching like a billowing river of flame down Government street. I saw my boyhood chum, Willie McCowan, proudly strutting beside his father, both carrying brooms over their shoulders, expressive of the Bryanite boast that they would "sweep this country."

My father, a sound money Democrat, watched the parade with grim lips tight under his black beard. I remember how the telephone, at that time newly come to Mobile, carried all night long returns from that election in which the boy orator of the Platte so nearly captured the Presidency from William McKinley.

Very clearly emerges the picture of how we learned of the assassination of McKinley. We had gone across the Bay. That morning the Heroine steamed up the shore with her flag at half-mast. Excited queries brought from the boat's crew the news they had learned from the telegraph—the President had been shot; Theodore Roosevelt was President.

There are some casual references in verse to the Dreyfus case.

At that time my boyish attention began to be riveted on the problem of death and the after life. Lightening that gloom comes into the picture a whole array of sonnets to girls, varying from the Shakespearean to the Spenserian to the Petrarchan form, as I learned these slightly different methods of interweaving rhymes on the ends of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. I do not think I ever showed them to any of the girls; my interest was only in the writing.

LOVE AND DEATH

At about the beginning of the teen-age, two themes run neck and neck in these poetic note-books. One is concerned with grisly prophecies of the Day of Judgment, and of eternal torment. Alternating with this is a steady stream of poems to unnamed girls. At this distance I cannot remember whether this or that poem was to any particular girl, or just to girls in general. It was a reflection of the high school course on Shakespeare, in course of which I studied the sonnets as well, and undertook to write Shakespearean sonnets largely as exercises. One or two of them bear notations of initials. I hardly think the girls to whom they were addressed—if they ever saw them —thought much of these sonnets. They would much rather, I am sure, have received a box of candy, flowers, or even an invitation to a dance. But up to the time I left home I had never gone steady with any of the innumerable girls who attended Sunday School next door, or went to the Barton Academy, or came to mother's Bible classes. More's the pity, because every boy who could left town in those days—as soon as he could; for there seemed little chance of getting ahead in the world for those who stayed. The girls we left behind must have been very lonesome.

So in among terrible pictures of the End of the World—very real to me, nourished by the Millenarian Prophecies, which built on the visions of the Book of Daniel and of the Revelation awful pictures of the destruction of the Judgment—in among these I find shy little love-poems.

Maybe this is an explanation of those pictures of hell and death the medieval monks used to pour out in such a terrifying flood. Frustrated, disappointed and abjured love, abandoned by them for the cloisters, took itself out in a horrible relish of foretold damnation.

NIGHT WINDS

The wailing night-winds, moaning 'mong the trees
Are but the weary sighs of doomed souls
Condemned to long eternity of pain,
And hasting back to groaning agony
After a brief respite amid the stars,
Beholding from afar the shining glory
And dazzling beauty of the Throne of God
That only serves to bind their self-forged chains
The tighter round their torn and bleeding necks;
And by comparison makes their lot seem harder,
Contrasting heavenly harmony, hellish discord;
And brings to them that greatest agony
That earth or hell can bring; "It might have been—
Too late, too late;—ye cannot enter now."

On the same page, as a kind of antidote to this horrifying picture, is a record of that common experience of the soothing power of moonlight;

But few are mortal woes cannot be calmed
  By gazing on the majesty of Night,
Or wonder of some snow-clad mountain peak,
  A glistening glory in the moon's white light.
All feelings save of awe sink into naught
  At sight of yon great Ocean, leaping wild
And joining in the battle that is fought
  By element on element for ever
Until the earth and sea are not, and fire
Exults o'er everything, the while sad winds
  Chant a long death-song round earth's funeral pyre.

Now to many young folks of this irreverent age, all these fears and forebodings may seem like just vaporing. But I can remember hearing, in wild blasts shaking the trees around the rectory, just such screams and wails—a result of long poring over the pages of Dante's Inferno, illustrated by Gustave Doré. Pictures of Paolo and Francesca, borne on the hurricane endlessly around the rocky caverns of hell, clung to me. It was not a healthy influence.

But these visions of the supernatural were not all so gloomy. On the next page to the Song of the Sword I find this hymn:

> O Three in One and One in Three,
> O great and glorious Trinity,
> From Whom all being is, and was,
> And shall be; evermore the cause
> Of all things great, and good and true,
> Who seest all men through and through,
> Look down upon us, we beseech,
> And of Thine all-knowing goodness, teach.

Then this fragment:

> When thy soul hath inspiration, fear thou not but sing it boldly;
> Though thy song be nought to mankind, yet thy song doth come from God.

In among these is tucked this:

> As when on some sweet Autumn day the whole world lies a-dreaming
> In golden haze of mellow light, and birds sing sweet and low,
> Cold winds from out the frozen North on this fair scene come screaming
> And silence all the birds' sweet songs, and leave a track of woe;
> So sweetheart, seemed the world to me, in beauty neath thy smiling—

What happened next is not clear.

On some of these verses, copied into my red-covered note book, I find fanciful names such as "Cordifraga" or "Amadita." At this length of time I have forgotten who "Heart-breaker" or "Little Beloved" were, if indeed they were ever anything but labels.

One I recognise. It was to the daughter of a tea-merchant, who wore one summer an enormous hat that made her look, as

I remarked in a frank moment, like a walking toadstool, which hurt her feelings. To her I inscribed this:

Is't strange the clouds do weep, when thou art ill?
Is't strange that wailing winds the heavens fill
With lamentations and with moanings sad?
How can the sky be bright, the earth be glad
When thou, the brightness of the stars, dost droop,
When thou, the gladness of the earth, hast croup?

It was really laryngitis, but there is no rhyme for that ailment.

Another sonnet is marked "E.H.T.," indicating it was addressed to our cousin Ellen, who spent one summer with us across the bay. Ellen, an only child, had been much pampered. In our household, with five boys and three girls, her airs produced much discontent, and the crowd of suitors that followed her night and day got very much on our nerves. However, one could not blame her for being very attractive; and I wrote her this high flown sonnet dated August, 1900, implying that at the time I was 14, and so must ask pardon. It is a couplet-sonnet, a rhyme form I did not much use because it is too simple. The Shakespearean form, with its quatrains, or the Petrarcan form, with its convoluted echoes, suited me much better.

So here is the one to Ellen:

TO E. H. T.

When on yon radiant-glittering midnight host
I gaze, I wonder which far sphere can boast
That ere thou camest for a passing space
To show the weary world thine angel face,
It was thy home, thy kingdom; now thy reign
Extends o'er worthier realm—the hearts of men.
O happy beam, that bore thee downward thence
To claim thy kingdom; happier beam that hence
Shall bear thee upward, queen of earth and sky,
For earth and heaven do their glad homage pay.

Yet dare not lift adoring eyes to thee
Except as slaves—as to a star the sea.
Shall I, a part of earth, from earth be free
To claim the boon that they claim not from thee?

I can remember the extremely puzzled look Ellen turned on me when she concluded reading this extraordinary sonnet. Ellen was some six years older than I, and knew much, much more. I am sure she was wondering what in the world her fourteen year old cousin meant by this concluding couplet, but wise girl, said nothing, except to gurgle rapturously over it and tuck it carefully away in some secluded feminine hiding place.

Another sonnet is labelled for "M.D." who, if I remember, was a young singer just making her debut in neighborhood parties, with an occasional bit in the summer opera. It is written in the Spenserian stanza form; one of the results of discovering the Faerie Queene in the YMCA library:

TO M. D.

As when some violin yearning to the bow,
  Gold-tongued pours balm-like in the wounded ear
A dreaming ecstasy, liquid and low,
  Which thence the love-enwinged soul doth bear
  Far, far away, beyond the taint of care
To realms of mazy happiness foregone,
  Whose golden gleams gild oft the nightly air;
The while the fixed eye and breath long-drawn
Bear witness to the soul's hour-free abstraction;—
Even so thy voice so charms my gloating sense
  I mark not words, so sweet the music seems;
Absorbing all thy dulcet eloquence
  I hearken to the melody of dreams
  Like one who floats adrift along love-murmuring streams.

The next sonnet is addressed to "Molly"—the daughter of an Italian grocer who kept a small store in the shabbiest part of the south of town quarter in which rents were low. Molly

came to our Sunday School, which was the only place I ever saw her except when I strolled by the store, just in case. I remember clearly the intense black of her hair and the extraordinary brilliance of her large, very black eyes. My brother, Royal, in an incautious moment, printed this sonnet also in the Sewanee Literary Magazine:

TO MOLLY

Of all the titles known of classic fame
  High sounding names majestic, that of yore
  Some great wealth-crowned queen or princess bore,
Who in the world's emblaze high places claim;—
Not all of those, whom ancient fables name,
  Like Daphne, Helen, or in modern lore
  Marguerite or Isabel, could charm me more
That simple Molly, nor my fancy frame
A sweeter sound. With richly luscious roll
  And tuneful warmth it falls upon the ear;
But most I love it for the twice-loved soul
  Of that self-royalled princess—crownless here
Save with the ungemmed glory of her hair
That it suggests; whose eyes of Sirius' splendor stole.

These girl-poems begin to reflect a sort of uneasy conscience;—I had thrown at so many of their bright, uncomprehending heads this huge bouquet of undying affection in stilted rhyme and meter that it began to seem hardly right to vow so much to so many.

Then comes another expectant sonnet, predicting the love-songs I intended to write when I REALLY fell in love.

If I such parted praises weaving sing
  One whom my eyes have not yet seen, and grace
The figment of some chance-empainted face
With what I know of love soft harping-string;
And to the altar of fresh fancies bring
  Flowers of my mind; and all too lightly lace
  Around the form of some unformed space
Enchantments of such phrased blossoming;—

What shall my singing sound, when I shall see
The face of her whose love has been my light
Preshadowed through my forward-envious years?
Then shall I claim the full-blown spirit-fee
For glad past service in that dawning bright
When our full sun of love, now dimmed, then full appears.

Next is written a record of a mood of black self-disgust, at which apparently I stood off and gazed with interest, much as I had looked in the mirror while father was administering a sound thrashing with a leather strap. The sonnet carries its date within it:

Beneath the yoke of darkening pain unknown,
Sorrows forecast too big for my young soul
The weary hours drag by with leaden groan
And o'er my head with senseless taunting roll.
Now every moment with its clenched sting
Groups all my years into a wide despair,
And blackens with its loud dishonoring
My thoughts of future fame, or fair career.
Although but sixteen summers have I borne,
And they without a point of haunting pain
It seems in those dark moments that I mourn
The grief of aching centuries in vain.
But of such travail, heavenly rapture springs;
A song is born that soars to heaven on rainbow wings.

And here is another that indicates a clear realization that all of this sonnet-stuff was mere rehearsing. At this age of sixteen I felt that the girl who was to be really my life partner was then living somewhere, just as curious about me as I was about her. At that time your mother, it turns out, was leading an insurrection in the Chicago high school to which she lent, her teachers have since assured me, a constant flavor of wild novelty. Her embattled circle was known as "that O'Reilly gang" and if there was any sorrow grieving her at the time, it was rage at the outcome of a class election. Anyhow, I felt

that she might need a little encouragement; so I wrote this—a good many years before we met:

What is your sorrow, O my heart unmet?
For in my soul I feel a kindred pain.
Through the dark cloud that blinds our vision yet
Throbbing to mine, your heart throbs not in vain.
What grief of yours I bear I do not know;
Nor why unknowing comes to me this cry;
But bonded force compels me to that woe,
And though through world-wide space, to sigh with sigh.
Now know I why that when my heart is bowed
By early grief or sickening despair
A gentle whisper thrilling not aloud
By halving quite destroys my load of care.
Ere meeting met, when that we meet again
Can no such grief endure, nor evermore a pain.

It was a prophecy that has come true.

Of my four sisters, Louise, the eldest, died in an accident three months before I was born. Irene, a trifle older than I, was my playmate during the earlier years, when we tussled over the wars of the Greeks and Trojans—she always took the side of the Trojans, I of the Greeks—and went exploring in our Finding-Land to discover rare imaginary jewels in the shape of broken glass and mysterious bits of wood.

Melville was my godchild. Five years younger than I, she taught me much more religion than I ever taught her. Edith—her full name is Edith Marguerite Lorraine—as the baby girl was the darling of the tribe. Never was there a less spoiled darling; she gave back in full measure all the affection lavished on her and on Cyril, the "Finale", who crowned the long procession with artistic and business triumph as a noted architect.

To my three sisters I wrote this rhyme, on being asked by some prying outsider: "Which of your sisters is your favorite?"

SWEETHEARTS THREE

Now pity the man with sweethearts three!
  Whose bosom was torn and distrest
When he tried to decide—now folly betide!
  Which one of the three he loved best.
It surpassed all his art to confess from his heart
  Which one of his soul was queen;
So he loved them all three with an equal love—
  Edith, and Mel, and Irene.

Now one was blest with a kindly wit,
  And a sympathy deep and true;
And one had a voice like the nightingale's own
  And an eye like the sea, gray-blue;
And one was dark and tall and sedate
  With eyes like a magic spell;
Now which of the three should be his fate—
  Edith, Irene, or Mel?

The eldest again was womanly wise
  In the ways of princes and friends;
And the next could charm the rain from the skies
  To serve her own mischievous ends;
And the grace of the youngest one truly made her
  A very soul-comfort to be with.
Now which of the three would a wise man prefer,
  Melville, Irene, or Edith?

So the poor lorn lover a monk became
  And never a woman would wed
"For so I can love them all three just the same
  While all of us live," he said.
"Nor one or the other I'll choose of the three,
  For I love them all full too well."
And how could a man any happier be
  Than with Edith, Irene, and Mel?

Beneath all these changing events and impressions lies the deep foundation of our reverence for our father and mother. The church was his, hers was the home. How was it possible

for a woman so frail and sickly as mother was at the age of 16 —at the time she was married—to bear ten children, maintain the home of an impecunious minister, be the organist, Sunday School teacher and head of the altar guild and at the same time maintain an unflagging interest in art and music? Seven doctors told her, gently but firmly, that she could not live a year more. She played at the funerals of all of them, and lived to cradle her great grand-children in arms that never grew weary of rocking.

Every day in summer as evening fell she would go to the edge of Seacliff and with paint or pastel depict the incredible splendors of those sub tropic sunsets. Most of this panorama of water and cloud and sky we learned to see through her eyes.

You will note, in The Chosen Nation, the constant impress of that maternal affection. The Spirit of Song and the Soul of Mankind alike are reflections of her gentle but unflagging spirit.

On her sixtieth birthday I wrote her this:

TO MOTHER

Upon your brow has gentle Time
  Another year's rich jewel set
Its luster adding to the rime
  Of that most queenly coronet
    Which sparkles on your matron hair
    And sheds a silver splendor there.

Age cannot chill, nor falling years
  Unyouth a heart in love secured.
Elixir of unselfish tears
  Wells in your heart whose May endured
    The autumn weight of grinding care,
    But laughed away its own despair.

Girl heart within a matron breast,
  Spring laughter in storm-cleared eyes,
Young arms, whose haven of deep rest
  Bear now their second lullabies
    Mother most dear, sweetheart most true,
    How shall we show our love to you?

Teach us your youth, as old we grow.
  Teach us to laugh away despair.
To face away temptation show;
  To love away the gripe of care.
    These favors on this birthday do.
    Your children ask—less young than you.

We all held father in affectionate awe. After a sampling of the society parsons met in other cities and parishes, I wrote him this:

He fights front-ranked with that stern group
  Rock-fast against a howling sea
Who guard God's banner, lest it stoop
  Before the hate-wild devilry.

With ensign high at jingling pace
  White squadrons, cheering, form and wheel.
He wipes red sweat from scar-grimed face
  And, wearied, grips and swings his steel.

They see him not, so deep is he
  Beneath the clang of whirling blows.
But look; the black-browed enemy
  Salutes him as they cross and close.

Ranging the field, his Captain's eyes
  Is caught, and dwells, and looks again;
Christ turns and smiles, with tears, on high,
  In thanks to have such fighting-men.

Father passed unnoticed, so far as ecclesiastical honors and preferment were concerned, except that more work was continually laid on his shoulders. But the people of Mobile knew him for their father in God.

He died at the age of one month past 90, just before the outbreak of World War II. He saw it coming and had no desire to witness it.

To the last moment he was able to stand, he was at the altar. Seized with a muscular convulsion there, he crept from the sanctuary to bed, and waited for the children to assemble, then died peacefully—and glad.

BIRTH OF THE "CRESCENDO"

That summer of 1902 saw an outburst of verse. For years I had dreamed, and waked, and walked, and talked, and made bosom friends with Keats, Milton, Shelley, Spenser. After trying my hand at all the forms of verse of which they were masters, I thought that a worthy disciple should follow in their footsteps to the extent of inventing his own.

One night the verse-form I call Crescendo came to perfect fruition. It is clear in memory. A southwest wind was singing through the trees; the wistaria vine swayed and rippled under the white glare of a full moon. In the south a towering cumulus presented all the appearance of a snow-topped mountain. This poem welled up from the subconscious in its complete and present form. I never changed a syllable.

Each of the three stanzas treats of the same subject but each on a different level; one physical, one mental, one spiritual. The rhyme and the rhythm forms are intricate and exact. For years I have been trying to write—intentionally—another as good as this subconsciously perfected Crescendo, without success. It is the first I ever wrote—for that matter, the first any one ever wrote.

I have written many others, in the attempt to capture this clean rapture of that complete first poem. But the others are all lame, halt and blind, compared—at least in my mind—with it. I wish some one else would try it.

Each stanza is composed, as you see, of eight lines; the beat is five, six, five, three; five, five, six, three. The rhyme-form is: a, b, a, c; d d c x—the x meaning the last word, which rhymes in all three stanzas.

OVER THE HILLS

Over the hills, beyond the snow-crowned height
That mocks, O love, from earth thine ever-shifting stars
My Lady sleeps—sleeps through the summer night
Beneath the Southern moon,

While Auster from his oceans to her bears
In perfumed wealth their rich Aeolian airs.
Of their wide wonder-eld he weaves, in mystic rune
Peace, round My Lady, sleeping.

Yet more than icebound rocks between us lie,—
Barriers I cannot scale, nor thou command away;
For frosty wills in scorn—the irony
Of circumstance and fate—
Doom us to drag apart the weary day,
And night of lovelier heaviness away.
Asleep, what dost thou dream?—While I for nothing wait;
Sweet be thy visions, sleeping.

Yet more than iron will My Lady keeps,
Yet even more than Fate's blind, causeless mockery.
Beneath the Southern moon my Lady sleeps,
Beneath the summer sun,
Through all the winter years that are to be
—Cups, brimming cups of timeless misery—
Until this vacant show of hollow shades be done
For me, beside her sleeping.

Enchanted by the first Crescendo, I made another, which won the gold badge for Poetry in the St. Nicholas League contest in August, 1902. In this one, the key word is "peace."

QUIET DAYS

Morning.

Bright from the flowering East, the royal Sun
Salutes the world, which hails in answering jubilee.
Into the midmost sapphire wins he on,
A charioteer sublime.
Where red Montrose, frowning across the sea
Guards Daphne's peace, above her reverie,
I drowse and love away the silver-flitting time
In days of perfect peace.

Evening.

Across all heaven the soft autumnal haze
Weaves goldenly the hours into a distant dream.
Soft-dawning through that mellow sunset blaze
The star of Love glows clear.
We, in new glory, of the world supreme,
Forecast these ancient glories to our dream.
In our new life the mist and hallowing star shall cheer
Long days of perfect peace

Night.

Without, sharp bites the hungry-howling night;
Swift-scudding drifts cloud o'er the winter-frosted sky.
Blackening afar a fiery-crowned height
Echoes tumultuous war.
Within, bright comfort mocks the lowering sky
Hearts warm with love the deadening chill defy.
Bright summer's dewy grace, the evening mist and star
End in this perfect peace.

One of these verses written in the new form did great harm. It never had but one stanza, and was entirely an exercise of the imagination. But I told one girl, a very sweet and darling young lady of about my age, that it meant her. It wounded her deeply. She said, with trembling lips: "I—I don't really think I deserve that", and ran away, her eyes filling. I was too much of a fool to explain that it didn't really mean any one. We were both very miserable for a long time. It ran thus:

The jessamine, my lady, which was thine,
Is ashes—ashes. Once, I thought it could not die;—
Its perfumed ecstasy of spirit-wine
Flown into the wide air.
I buried it, my lady, with a sigh,
This guerdon to thy lover—which was I—
E'er yet the inconstant moon, that heard thy vow and prayer
Had wasted into day.

As a lame sort of atonement I wrote another, in not quite the same meter, because in spite of this meanness she had been very kind when I was very downcast over losing my job. She hadn't laughed, as others did. So I wrote this:

MY LADY CONSOLATION

Out of the deep I cried,
Where sodden darkness, writhing in wild forms
Smothers in glaring horror dumb and wide
Souls overblown by storms
Into its pit who fall.
You heard my strangling call
And like an angel cleaving from God's height,
Untouched, that hideous gulf of midnight gall
You drew me to the light.

* * *

In our Over the Bay cottage, my brother Ernest and I occupied the east bedroom. Sometimes, especially in the late months, we would be awakened by a bird-call before the sunrise.

On one such morning, both woke while the morning star was blazing against a sky of almost complete black. You know how suddenly morning comes, and twilight falls, in those sub-tropical latitudes. This was like that. The enormous star, seeming as big as the moon, but brilliantly white, like a diamond, instead of yellow, was unearthly in its beauty.

It struck us both. Ernest began humming an air, later elaborated into his song beginning:

"Awake! the morning star waits to bless in the sky"

I composed this Crescendo—at least the first part of it. The germ of it was a remark by Margherita, of whom I thought a great deal. She said:

"I don't believe in puppy love. I want the real thing, and no substitutes."

Then she said, earnestly and simply:
"That is the only thing any girl really lives for."

The remark touched me deeply. It would touch me even more now, when the prevalent attitude is so completely different. So in tribute to her sweet simplicity, I wrote:

MAIDEN-HEART

Like unawakened morning, calm and pure,
Which dreams in crystal peace beneath dawn's magic star,
Dwell yet awhile O maiden heart, secure.
Not yet the royal sun
Has risen in his splendor-winged car,
But roseate beams, cast faintly from afar
Herald the coming Lord; his flaming breast upon
Behold, Love rides to thee.

Dwell like a silken sanctuary chaste
Within whose marble peace, rich with dim-glittering gold
One hears before the high triumphant feast
Young angels whispering, plain.
Love has not lit within that silence cold
His starry lights in constellations old
Nor has his glory-hymn, in high exultant strain
Through incensed arches rung.

But when bright Love shall as a sun arise
And through the level East his golden glories pour,
How wonderful shall glow those placid skies,
How bright their dim depths shine!
When kingly Love that altar stands before,
How glorious shall it burn forever more;
And hymns that storm the heavens, in ecstasy divine
Through incensed arches ring!

After graduation I tried two or three jobs in Mobile, finding none that suited me—or to be more exact, finding none I could keep. I taught myself shorthand, and developed considerable

speed—but never could keep my mind on the dull business of chronicling the daily events of a railroad freight office.

During my tenure of the job at the Southern Railway freight office, I took part in one epic maneuver, the return to the United States of the troops which had been sent to Cuba, after that little country was established as a republic and set on its own feet. They came up the yellow Mobile River on troopships loaded to the topmost vantage point with boys in blue, looking with eager eyes at the shabby little port Mobile was then as though it was very heaven. To most of them it was the portal to Paradise, they told us, after the fever-ridden jungles of Cuba.

But whether freight or soldiers was the burden of my daily task I could not concentrate on it.

> "For ever in the forefront of his ken
> Sweep vision armies of the past, which he
> Beholding is enwrapped with fatal ecstasy—"

I wrote poems to the office force; I wrote poetry on railroad stationery; I did everything except keep track of the chief clerk's records which was supposed to be my business. So eventually I was fired—to the mutual relief of the chief clerk and myself.

It was resolved that I should go forth and seek my fortune elsewhere. My brother Gardiner had become assistant at the Cathedral in New Orleans, and offered to find me a job there. As the time grew near to leave Mobile, and the Eastern shore, it seemed to become far dearer.

In my sixteenth year I quit Mobile for New Orleans. The day before leaving, I went up on top of the red cliff at Montrose at sunset, and composed a poem called "The Commission." It sums up the strange world of fantasy and myth in which I had lived all those youthful years, wherein legends of Greeks and Norsemen seemed far more real than shadowy figures of con-

temporary politics. Its verses breathe a deep conviction that I was going forth to cast a mantle of poetry over the prosaic West.

THE COMMISSION

Upon Montrose, while flamed departing day
  Across storm-lurid waters wild and wide,
I watched wind-woven clouds in rich array—
  Fantastic forms, with bearing full of pride—
  Across the sky in weird procession ride.
Red were the hurrying heavens, red the sea;
  The woods behind and far on either side
Glowed in that angry glare; and every tree
Stood like a pinioned ghost, and whispered fearfully.

Like fallen angels, hovering on the wing
  Beneath the cope of hell-surrounded fire
They swept the front of heaven, impanelling
  Strange shapes thereon; gray forms of legends dire,
  Woes of old gods, dim wraiths of dead despair;
And through their host, like grim unchanging fate
  The Sun, which is their splendor and their fear,
—The Sun, which is their life, and whom they hate—
Long purple shadows cast, with crimson alternate.

Silent as spokes of some gigantic wheel
  That times the stroke of death, and change and fear,
Some ageless Law that moves beyond appeal
  Those purple bars revolve and disappear.
  By cloud-shapes they are cast in swift career
Yet slow they move like laggards lingering by.
  And as they pass, those phantoms vague and drear
Mark out their varying life, and change, and die;
To dusty ash they turn, and fringe the Northern sky.

It seems that woe and death and all despair
  Grip at the heart when flaming glories born
Of cloud and sunlight in the angled air
  Sink in the pallid northern sky forlorn;
  When wraith and dream and legend in the scorn
Of whelming darkness scatter few and far.
  Yet high above their rout, by chill winds torn

Dawns the wild beauty of the Evening Star,
To bless all groping hearts that quest for truth afar.

As amulet secure in storm or war,
  In shifting rage of summer or of snow,
Haven of peace, whose refuge none may bar
  Welcomes through hostile clouds of stinging woe—
  They who have passed that fire her beauty know.
To them no pain, save sorrow for her height
  Strikes through the circling charm; serene they go
To meet what things may chance of thirst or night,
Secure of rest at last, in ever-healing light.

But to the golden splendor of her love
  No souls may win save they who first have known
The ruined terror of the dreams they wove
  Burn in remorseless flame; and who alone
  Amid the wreck of vain hopes lightly blown
Have stood and wept, and for the solace yearned
  Of faith unshaken, sure, to knowledge grown.
They, they have seen the Star that always burned
Steadfast through shattered clouds, and all her wonder learned.

She spoke to me across the purple bound.
  That star called gently from her royal rest;
"Go forth, and strike the chord I bid you sound;
  Go forth and spread my banner to the west.
  With purple of my magic you shall vest
These hills and streams and cities, and this plain.
  The eyes of men look too much on the past;
They long too much for ancient things and vain.
What shall I whisper low, that challenge forth again."

So fare I forth, for this voice came of God,
  And this commission is no idle thing.
Therefore I often writhe beneath the rod
  Because I shrink and palter, wondering;—
  To set the seal and blazon of a king
On common heads, and overlooked, and passed;
  To challenge forth what none has thought to sing;
To find in slighted mire rich jewels cast—
This is the task I bear; which I shall do at last.

Despite all these high ambitions it was a scared and lonesome lad who took the 4:17 Louisville and Nashville train for New Orleans. Dusk fell about the time we entered the endless marshes that lie between Mississippi and Louisiana. Those marshes, with the dense swamps that stretch west of them, surely are the most desolate and terrifying wastes of nothingness one can find along any railroad. Mile after mile of black and treacherous jungle, thickly festooned with vines and creepers and obscured with ragged curtains of gray or black moss;— mile after mile in growing darkness, not knowing what was ahead because I had never been away from home before; not knowing what I was to do when I got there; not a friend or acquaintance on the jolting, dingy train:—

That was before the days of the sumptuous stream-liners. I was on a day coach, not a Pullman; cinders and soot poured through the open windows.

Not knowing enough to make friends with the conductor, the porter or other passengers I sat there growing lonelier and more apprehensive with every mile; until, just to feel a friendly contact, I went back to my pile of baggage at the end of the car, got out the typewriter which I had purchased out of my meager railroad earnings, and ran my fingers over the familiar keys which had leaped to my touch with poems and stories for many a month.

Thus comforted I went back to the red plush seat, gritty with cinders and chanted to myself the words of my epic poem The Chosen Nation.

So because that poem sums up all the hopes, fears and dreams of those sixteen years, it is given here in full. You need not read it all at once. But think of it as you read against the background of a dingy local train, swaying and jolting through interminable and terrifying swamps, yellow light from the train lamps shining on a tall, skinny and very scared youngster

chanting them to keep a defiant grip on his ebbing courage, sorely overtaxed.

THE CHOSEN NATION

Sea-lulled, I slept; and to me deep in dreams
Came One immortal, fair, misting her light
To my unequal eyes; as oft before,
When far in wonder through the teeming waste
Of perished years that under thickening dust
Rear their forgotten palaces, she led
Me, momently immortal. From the depth
Of night she dawned; above my sleep she hung
As burns the herald star; clear through my dreams
Her voice broke way, as rings far reveille
Faint through the morning mist. One word she spoke
A kindling summons; "Come." From sleep I rose
Trembling, upon her unseen wings upheld.

Then darkness, and wide coolness, and great night
Dawned on me, weak and trembling, new from slumber,
Fresh from the cramping body; and I lay
Borne softly on those broad and sheltering wings,
Till on the splendor of eternal things
I raised spiritual eyes.

Then with a rush and roar and blinding light
The glory burst, which in the deeps of night
In darkness and in silence ever dwells.
Borne on the tide of that unceasing wind
That draws beyond the stars, and filled with God
Beats high tremendous surges full and free
I hung amazed, and on my shattered sight
Received but flaming darkness. Yet my heart
Sang in the mighty turmoil; and full soon
My puny soul, with that huge breath infused
Endured the light, withstood the roaring sweep
Of giant winds, and on their surges swung.
Even as a child who from some havened shore
Laughs at the tumult of wide-thundering storm,
Or, drunk with fury of barbaric sires

Defiance hurls at gods of wind and sea
So I from shelter of sustaining love
Shouted in frenzy like a childish god;—

For glory flamed through heaven; from the deeps
Of night it dawned, and from the inmost air
Welled forth rejoicing;—full the gorgeous earth
Gave back a shimmering splendor, as the moon
Her meteor-riven blemishes may hide
Beneath the refluent bounty of her lord.
Far as my sight could reach that far outsped
Sirius aflame upon an ambient sea
That tide of light poured onward without end.

We not alone upon the swelling main
Held witness;—purer through the misty air
Flamed spirits, one and many. In their trail
Streamed as they passed bright gold, that sparkling blazed
And died upon the palpitating deep.
From earth and air they came, and whence the sea
Sent far his epic splendor through the night
And all upon one aim resolved their speed,
Where to the clouds heaves high a hoary head
Which erst the dusky children of lost years
Called Shasta from their immemorial past.
Thither we too, and swept the upper air,
Borne on the surge of that melodious fire.
So, borne by level Auster strong behind
Across far-rushing foam, on through the flame
Of some thrice-royal sunset, homeward sweeps,
War-worn with waves; the storm-bred charioteer;—

Above that vale where rolls his tawny flood
The Father-Water, wedding palm and pine;
And all his wide expanse at once we saw,
Spanning his course from Yellowstone to Sea;—

Yet on, above that standard mount we held
That steadfast bears above all rolling clouds
The Holy Cross; thereon its guardian sat,
An angel, throned upon eternal snows.

Toward him in wide consent met every wing,
And every spirit that cleft the radiant night
Gave reverent salutation as they passed
Which stately he returned; nor us he failed
Of greeting; me, a mortal recognized
He wondering hailed; and her, against the reach
Of earth who high upbore me, yet unskilled
To stem the swelling air, earth-tainted still.
He royally saluted, known of old.

Yet onward, and beneath us, black enscarred
Upon the regal earth; grim, wonderful
Beyond a night of wonder; dimly lit
By glancing joy that could not dwell so deep
The Canyon of the Colorado lay;
And of the lonely spirit therein who dwells,
In deep earth-elding sorrow shunning light,
In immemorial agony alone,
Of him knew I, and shuddered . . .
Dully beneath the pulsing overflow
That overwhelmed the too-attentive ear
His sorrow dwelt;—so through the leafy woods
When Autumn sets ablize the gorgeous south
And fragrant mist the dreaming earth envails
So faintly booms afar the sullen sea
While some forgotten storm still chafes the shore.

Now on the far horizon's youngest verge
The broad Pacific hung, and splendid blazed
As never yet beneath the moon unhorned
Of harvest where his tropic waters lave
Far coral shores, white in that distant sheen.
Long now our destined crest had I descried,
Bright with the gathered glory on his brows;
Glory that hung upon the radiant night
As on fast-fading purple strikes the dawn.
Straight on upon that blazing mount we held
Into its heart, whose congregated strength
In scalding light gave darkness to my eyes,
And whelmed my ears, in deep tempestuous sound
To depths of utter silence; and I shrank

Into that outer light, that darkly held
A balmy gloom. But she upon her breast
Clasped me, beat on by such tremendous sound
In gusts of deadening noise, blind in that light;
She touched my ringing ears that I might hear
Breathed on my scorched eyes, that I might see,
And on my lips—O wondrous touch of fire!
O consecrating kiss—her lips she laid.
And like god-flushing cordial, or the strain
Of violins winging far the soul hour-freed,
Or some deep draught of throbbing poetry
That shakes the waking strength to depths unknown,
New power winged my spirit to this height
And new endurance, flowing from her breath
Upbore me to this splendor . . . To her heart
That throbs with world-old pathos and the joy
Clear suffering only gives, she held me close,
That from the age-sprung fountains of her life
My soul might drink new strength to understand
What things I saw . . . That knowledge like a sea
Presses upon my life beyond poor speech,
And in that joy, of elder sorrow born
Lies pain again, star-eyed and full of peace.
For men hear not, nor through this thickset clay
Can ever gasp those airy syllables
Save lisping, weak and halt to this gross air.
But this gross air shall sweeten, and this clay
Shielding the trembling flame against rude blasts
Till it grow thrill and clear, shall melt away.
Then purer life, flame within flame inborn,
Soul within soul indwelling, kernelling still
Yet higher life and power, shall truthward stream
Unsummited aspiring without end

* * *

II

Then slowly to my strengthening sight appeared
A spirit-concourse centering on that peak.
Above their host quick-changing colors shone
As flames in Northern night the Arctic glare
On waste Niagaras wonderful and wild,

Nameless in snow beneath the glittering Pole.
A many chorded music richly blent
Rang through the echoing air the while they spoke,
For spirits utter music else they die.
I knew them all of old, though then first seen,
For in her kiss such knowledge was I given
That I, beyond myself exalted far,
Remembered what I knew not, and could see
Things yet to come in endless serried reach
Beyond the poor horizon of my days
Like mountains heaving hugely to the sky
In blue tempestuous distances that dawn
Above close-ringing summits to the eye
Of eagles on a soaring current borne.
For as a sea-shell left by ebbing tides
Holds still enshrined their long-departed roar,
So in my soul resounding surged and rolled
Some faint reflection of that sea of song
Which in Her being dwells. For every life
That dreamed or hoped in all the ages gone
Yielded the treasure of its inmost thought
Into her soul, the Spirit of all Song.
Even as a vineyard, spread on Southern hills
Bears purple grapes of ruddy luscious vein
In whose ripe texture sunshine, rain and wind
That ever shone or blew or beat upon it
Lies mingled and immortal, pure distilled;
So all that past into my mind was born
A limitless array of memories vast,
In huge phantasmagoria dim and vague;—
Far-flaming wreck of empires stormed and fallen
On dire tremendous battle-fields of eld;
Nations set wild in joy and pain and fury;
Dusk myriads bowed adoring to their god
In rock-hewn temples of the infant world;
White-winged fleets on some forbidden sea
Sunk with their gold in oceans rich with pearl;
Wild hate-hymns screamed where battling standards whirled;
Te Deums sung o'er bloody flags new-furled—

With wisdom not my own I knew them there.
Storm-bred Brittania leaned her plumed head
On her once-mighty hand untridented
Her empire shaken now; her sea-blue eyes
Darkened with ruffling tempest; France was there,
And that proud mother of the fair-haired race
Which claimed the world; Europe saw all her peers;
And every state that holds the front of power
Were gathered in that council.
And there were
States long in tread of ebbing time outworn
Come now to drink new being from these heights
By them unwon within their placid stars.
Where their pure souls, freed from the taint of earth
Dwell evermore . . . For there imperial Rome
In living grandeur sat; with mystic eyes
Dreamed immemorial Egypt. India,
Dusk-eyed with legend, the exalted face
Beheld of tower-fronted Babylon.
Persia and Hellas, ancient wars forgot
Communed of higher purpose.
And there were
More ancient crowns than mind of man may tell
With strange barbaric faces; in their eyes
Slept awful centuries of hoary eld.
Surely about their gold-encinctured brows
Hung rolling mists agleam; and their huge names
Smote vague on my uncomprehending ear.

* * *

III.

Upon that height that first with roseate glow
Answers in light the flaming morning-star
A mystic Throne, upon the printless snow
With meaning crowned the wide concentric night,
Up to this splendor mounting. Angel-wrought
A living thing it stood; within its frame
Of coralline crystal played a delicate fire
That flashed or glowed as rang the changing sway
Of that mysterious music. So the heart
Of magic opal glows; so hangs a cloud

Instinct with summer lightning, lone afilm
Across the piercing moon; while else the sky,
Tinged with that hidden radiance, like new love
Resplendent shines, with glittering gold inveined.

It waited,—like a chalice altar-borne
Upon whose cup cathedral splendors verging
Declare it holy ere the sacring bell
Has named it throne of God; vain all the rest,
—Vain chant and prayer, rich twilight cool and high,
Censer and cross and constellations old
Glittering through scented mist like hope through prayer,
Save by expected presence sanctified.

Before the living Throne an altar stood,
Whiter than marbled snow; upon its crest
Lay fragrant offerings heaped; bright fruits and flowers
Of every clime from chill and shag-browed Maine
To California, rich with odorous gales,
And where the waters of the blue-maned gulf
Sweep palm-leaved Florida. There blushed the bell
Of fairy morning-glory, gemmed with dew;
Magnolia, with corroding touch that dies
Fragrant in purity; the soft disdain
Of virgin bower, with her own perfume drunken,
Drooping with languid wistfulness aside;
Azalea, and crepe myrtle, and wild rose,
With jasmine, and long vanished flowers that bloomed
In deep Virginian forests, or the heart
Of wonderful Yosemite, where sang
The cool-voiced seraphim, when earth was young
Where yet those echoes linger, hid from day.
These smiled, and like a censer breathed afar
An incense and a perfume rich and pure
Exhilarant like wine, yet soft and sweet
As morning breath of ocean; keen to drive
Mist-ragged clouds of fuming night away.

For that great One they waited, whose this was,
Soul of Mankind, God's purpose all revealing;—
For God was Law before the mist of stars
Formed in eternity; which through the void

Drifted in darkness, void and vast and still,
Till dawning Purpose through that formless waste
Sent quivering motion. Pulsing tremors grew
Till wild suns burst and wheeled and cast their broods
Revolving them through space; then was Time born;
Then from all worlds, and from the lap of earth
Sprang up a life within the life of Law,
Glorious unto itself, more glorious still
Unto its end, and conscious unto God.
Mankind was born, and lifted up wild eyes,
Till, bound in fears, and struggling to be free
Men gathered them together; then were born
Kingdoms and dominations and wide reign
And mightier essences, the souls of state;—

For even as these our bodies are composed
Of myriad cells, each with its little life,
That live and move and have divided being,
Yet under domination of one mind
Central and lord, may guide the course of years;
Even so of lives united is there born
A higher life, that with concentering ages
Grows strongly conscious; and of all nations now
Rises a greater life, Soul of the Race
Humanity's pure essence, Bride of God.

* * *

IV.

Now through melodious air a signal smote
Brooding upon the crest of melody,
To my weak hearing nothing; but they heard,
And knelt each one upon the radiant snow,
Bending with one accord like golden corn
Whose fields stretch measureless beneath the sun
When sudden south winds strike through heavy heat.
Wave after wave the proud-ranked tassels bow;
So bent the souls of nations small and great
When that great Silence sounded from the skies.

Then rose that ancient nation of the Nile
Who through hot endless centuries scanned the skies
In patient waiting for some august sign,

Stills watching since the morning of the world.
Aeons of adoration thrilled her tone
With all the wondering worship poured abroad
In all her temples through tremendous fanes
Of Memphis or El-Ammon or of On
While to the sound of sistrum and of harp
Dusk prostrate millions prayed to beasts as God.
With solemn eyes lift up to heaven she prayed
And they respond in angel-litany.

And as they pray—lo—lo,—strange flames appear
And robe themselves in darkness; rolling clouds
About that mystic Fire gathers apace.
Far-muttering thunders roll; dim grows the light
With mystery o'erborne;—Then cleft the cloud:—

Its splendid cloak around a Figure hung
More splendid in clear purity of light
That blinded me; yet though my face was hid
Against her breast who held me, I could hear
That "Peace be with you": and their "Peace, Amen"
According rolled, like one low-thundering surge
Swelled drowsing from the summer sea at rest.

And then arose a mystery to crown
This majesty of wonder; for One spake
Beyond all thought of power to understand
Of wonder and of wonder, and of love,
Of glory, and of glory, and of God.

They on their knees hearkened with hungry eyes,
Throbbing like smitten harps; but like a child
At some great coronation's pomp and pride
My wearied head sank on her shielding breast.

How long I slept I knew not till a kiss
Pressed wakening on my lips.

Those words had ceased; but still the quivering air
Shook with the mighty echo, as great waves
Thunder and plunge against a rocky cliff
Long after storms have ceased; while burdened clouds
Glow with remembered burning of spent fire.

Then stood one nation from the kneeling host;—
Chaldea, seer of nations, was her name
Who from her seat upon the hoary plain
Of old Mesopotamia watched the stars
In gorgeous constellations flame and wheel
Against heat-laden skies of cloudless blue
While softly plashing through palm-bordered banks
Euphrates, wed with Tigris, sought the sea.
Lady of Kingdoms, from her golden towers
Within the endless marsh she ruled the years
And now she spoke; and that great music held,
Meanwhile her speech, in largo grand and free
Like one I heard from deep-toned organ pealing
—Mayhap adream—through gloom rich-tint and rare,
While Rome her full pontificals outspread
To risen eyes, at Easter, of her Lord

Then by the hand that Eldest Nation brought
Thee, youngest Child of Time, before that throne,
And there presenting thee, O Mother Fairest,
Left thee, alone and chosen, there before
The Soul of Man, God's Purpose all made plain.

Then that great Soul upon our Mother's head
Her right hand laid, and to the flaming heavens
Lift up her eyes.

Then gathered all the light upon them there
Darkening all else. More bright, more bright it blazed
Upon them and around them steadily
Splendor that burnt and blinded; but not I
Could turn my sight away, until at last
Drawn up and lost into that utter Truth
Whose name is God, they two upon our sight
Grew faint, grew faint, and vanished.

Then dimmed the light, and faded. Darkness grew
After great glory. Darkness and cool night
Gave healing to sear eyes like balm on pain.

Then slowly and in silence with big hearts
Homeward those spirits went their several ways
And last we two. In sleep she laid me down.

With my head filled by these tremendous visions I got off the train at New Orleans, finding no one there to meet me. So I called a hack—that was before the days of taxis—loaded my trunk into it, and gave the driver the address of the Doanes —the family with which my brother was staying. Arriving I found that Gardiner had gone to meet me, and missed me. The hack driver charged me $2.50, which was more than I had left from the train fare. I was debating with embarrassment what to do when Gardiner came in and saved me.

Meanwhile Valerie, daughter of the Doanes, was giggling at my plight behind a window curtain. It was an inglorious entry into the City of Dreams.

CHAPTER 2

THE CITY OF DREAMS

NEW ORLEANS proved a new world—amazingly pleasant. Wide, curving, palm-bordered streets; a spirit of pervasive gayety; endless streams of visitors from all over the world; an architecture quaintly fascinating—exquisite in the newer sections, picturesque in the old; decked with gardens that bloom all winter—it won my heart.

Mobile had been notable chiefly for her desolate air of forsaken pride, as of a former belle now widowed. In my native town unhealed agonies of the Civil War still were evident on every hand.

As a railroad clerk walking to the Southern freight offices, one passed endless rows of deserted cotton warehouses, memorials of former greatness. There had been a time when the Gulf City was the chief cotton shipping center of the world, when river packets brought down from upper plantations burdens of baled cotton more enormous than entered or left any other port. This greatness had long passed away.

Mobile is older by a dozen years than New Orleans, having been founded by the brothers Le Moyne d' Iberville and Le Moyne de Bienville in 1702, before the first stakes were driven into Louisiana's marshes. But she had stagnated among her pine-clad hills. New Orleans was like a young, dashing belle, a red rose between her teeth, flashing provocative glances which lured away her elder sister's admirers. From the moment I saw her she charmed me with an enchantment that never has been broken. Although the Gulf City has regained much of

her original charm, the Crescent City still is the capital of romance.

My brother Gardiner, long a missionary to the fishermen and farmers of Baldwin County, had been installed as assistant rector at the fashionable Episcopal Cathedral. Rooming with him I met the delightful family into which he married—the Doanes. A job with the New Orleans Coffee Company failed me, for the same old reason—a fatal facility for enclosing poems by mistake for price quotations in business letters. So I got a job as cub reporter on the old Picayune.

Then, it seemed, living really began. At first I covered entertainments, club meetings, business conventions, ward rallies; then railroad wrecks, political news; ultimately the police court.

Presidents, senators, refugees from South American revolutions; fugitives, nobility from Europe, aspiring actresses, condemned murderers, scientific discoverers, were among daily acquaintances. It was a change from the quiet old rectory. Still on Sundays I sang in the Cathedral's vested choir—much to the despair of the organist, who did not desire to offend the assistant rector by asking me forcefully to quit.

The Picayune began to print my poems. Eventually, fired from the Picayune, I got a job on the Item. Then my poems became a regular feature in a column entitled "Editorials in Verse." Flattered by the resultant publicity, I never thought of asking any increase in salary.

At first, these verses struck the familiar note of the old

rectory. In Father's parish there was a note of simple sincerity. The folks were nearly all wage workers. Religion was a matter of human need and fellowship both in suffering and in happiness. But in this fashionable society Cathedral, religion had an artificial look. Attendance at services was very small. Many a time there were more persons in the vested choir than in the congregation. Only at Easter was the church filled.

The Sunday School was small and much neglected, not like the rollicking, teeming institution in which I had grown up.

Recalling the simple sincerity of the religion shared since childhood, I wrote two poems embodying this feeling of resentment, both published in the Picayune:

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Where away is the Garden of Eden?
For O, I would sail there today;
And where is the pilot to guide me,
And the compass to point me the way?

Seek not for that wonderful garden
Far away over fathomless foam;
For Eden hath smiled in the eyes of each child,
And the little soul knoweth its home.

But how shall I pass its bright portal?
For cherubim, armored in flame,
Turn back for his sin every man who would win
Eden-respite from sorrow and shame.

Go clad in an innocent spirit,
And take ye a little child's form;
For the sword that is cast of the thunderbolt blast
Dare never a little one harm.

And what shall I find me within it?
What gift do its bowers enfold?
Of treasure and art I am weary at heart
And the world with its pleasure grows cold.

Peace dwells in the borders of Eden;
Peace falls like the dew on its sod.
There the Tree that is Life endeth sorrow and strife,
And the children gaze ever on God.

Music in St. John's Church had been simple chants and familiar hymns, with an occasional solo. But the Cathedral Choir attempted many elaborate anthem settings with indifferent success. Its music seemed lacking in devotion. So I wrote:

ANTHEMS

Rapt in rare Cathedral splendor
  Swell rich hymns from many a choir;
Kneeling thousands bend to render
  Purchase-prayers for vain desire,
And the lipworn praise they tender
  Faints and falters at the spire.

Up from earth as evening darkens,
  Borne on twilight's fragrant breeze,
Swells a tide whereto God hearkens
  Through the plunge of crystal seas;
Look!—with smiling eyes He hearkens;
  Children pray, at mother-knees.

"Now I lay me" and "Our Father"
  Pure and sweet the murmurs rise.
See—the Lord would hear them rather
  Than celestial harmonies;
More than hosts of light would rather
  Gaze on love in infant eyes.

News that a trolley-line had been established along the sands of Egypt, bringing visitors to the Great Pyramid, elicited this:

Lord Pharaoh, stirless in his mummied sleep
  Within the age-enduring pyramid,
Shudders and stirs; the brooding shades that keep
  Eternal ward around his kingly head,
Serving his royal spirit, shrink and weep.
  A jackal throned on Cheops mocks the dead;
  Osiris disappears; his royalty is fled.

What though the griding clang of gong and wheel
  Profane that still and immemorial throne
Where Silence, with gray Memory alone
  Made holy buried empire?—though the peal
Of solemn temple-trumpet to the Sun
  Give place to thronging clamors infantile?

These rise, and scream, and like the winds are gone.
  Between the awful face of sand and star
Silent around, immeasurably far,
  They fade away into earth's living tone,
  The grand eternal chord, the sound forever one.

Among these are poems recording the impact upon a consciousness previously immune, of the stories of murder and torture, of infidelity and filth that form daily grist of a reporter.

TRIBUTE

To and fro on the breadth of the earth
  Walk the spies of the Master of Hell;
And they shake with a horrible mirth
  As his toll and his tribute they tell.

On the face of the footstool of God
  An altar to hell have we built;
We have sprinkled with innocent blood
  And have set it aflame with our guilt.

By quarrel and ambush and feud,
  With pistol and shotgun and knife
Quick brawls in hot drunkenness brewed
  Blind rage at a friend and a wife.

In murder and riot and raid,
  By accident, folly and fun,
Still the toll to the devil is paid,
  And the blood of the slaughtered flows on.

We have chosen our Caesar and King,
  We have sought him and followed his call;
Now his tribute each day we must bring,
  And his tax,—we must render it all.

Christmas always found me homesick. New Orleans was not very far away from Mobile, even then. Whenever possible I ran back home. There are numbers of these Christmas poems, striking a dark note, such as this:

UNTIL I COME—

Today the sound of pealing bells
  Rolls round the earth in long-drawn chime,
From lone reefs lost in ocean swells
  To tower and town and peak sublime.

Two thousand years have heard that cry
  Across the heavens grow and wane
Since first wild glory thrilled the sky
  And music fell on David's plain.

The Baptist died by Herod's sword,
  A myriad martyrs burned and bled;
Hell swung her sulphurous gates and poured
  Her legions forth with fury fed;

And still that Voice the tribesmen heard
  Strange in Judean deserts bare
Sounds ever forth the warning word;
  "My Kingdom comes! Repent! Prepare!"

Christmas time in the South in those years was the occasion of much irreligious merriment. For a month before hand, the rattle of firecrackers and the flare and hiss of rockets filled the air. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day the infernal racket reached its climax. At night the sky was a network of wriggling rocket trails.

Everybody seemed to get drunk. So one year I wrote—when the news columns were unusually full of murders and drunken outrages:

CHRISTMAS STORIES

With stories of lusting and crime,
  Of blood in blind fury outpoured,
We welcome the hallowing time
  Of the day of the birth of the Lord.

In hearts where His Temple is built,
  In souls where His Kingdom should dwell,
Long chapters of slime and of guilt,
  Foul tales that were fearful in hell

Are greeted and given a home,
And we fondle them, cherish and keep;
Till the crowded heart-inn has no room
For the Babe, in the manger asleep.

Night-rider, highwayman and thief,
Lost women, the fools they drag down,
Crazed dupes of a bloody belief,
Foul jester and blasphemous clown,

—For these, and their folk and their kin
Their creed and their crime and their word,
There is welcome and warmth at the inn;
But the wail of the Child is unheard!

This was all too preachy. In that warm, sparkling atmosphere of New Orleans it was not long before the incongruous prophet's mantle fell from my shoulders, revealing the troubadour's gay garb, which had much more popular appeal.

Presenting another view of Christmas is this reminiscence of a family party at the Doanes, where mistletoe hung from every chandelier.

At that time it was still the tradition that women preferred to be wooed and won. There was no particular girl captured under mistletoe for whom this song was written. It merely represents the spirit of the thing.

MISTLETOE

What tender charm has mistletoe
That hovering o'er my lady there
Makes her so sweetly yielding grow
On this one night of all the year?
All other nights in vain sue I
With vow, and plea, and reason why.

Clear logic moves her not a whit;
Persistent pleading gives offense;
What Druid magic lies in it,
Surpassing all my eloquence,
That makes her to my wooing stay,
Not blush and frown and slip away?

O miracle of mistletoe,
  Too seldom sought, too quickly fled!
Sweet essences within it flow,
  Distilling kindness on her head.
    If I could learn with magic art
    To fuse that cordial in my heart—

I'd weave the charm of Christmastide
  Around the long and barren year
That my caress she should abide
  And yield whenever I came near.
    Old Druid charm of Christmas night,
    Tell me, where have you taken flight?

* * *

A case of inflamed eyes forced me to keep them closed in daylight, or covered with heavy dark glasses. On the streetcar some man said: "Looks like a swell bright day." I said: "I'm just honing for the darkness. This light hurts my eyes."

This set me thinking how painful it would be to live in unclouded sunlight with no possibility of shade, if one were all one great Eye, lacking eyelids. So on the way down to the office this formed in my mind, to be written when I got to a typewriter:

WEATHER

Above dark clouds of sullen gray
  That cloak the lowering firmament,
The sun shines on in endless day,
  No murk with that clear glory blent.

But who would dwell in endless day?
  No moon, no stars, no sunset skies,
No primrose dawn, no twilight gray,
  No night to rest the weary eyes!

Then welcome well each swift mischance
  Of tangled fate or sudden strife;
'Tis shift of changing circumstance
  That makes good weather—and good life!

New Orleans lies below the level of the Mississippi River. Many a time, rage or disappointment were calmed down by lone ferry rides back and forth across the bosom of Old Man River. One could see eternity sliding past in the enormous volume of that gigantic flood, bearing in its current the life substance of a continent to be buried in the sea.

Out of this contemplation grew:

QUEER, ISN'T IT?

Though my soul is torn with trouble, I perceive
How strange!
In the earth and sea and heaven, while I grieve,
No change.
For the sun and moon and stars shine just as brightly
As before
And the birds across blue heaven flit as lightly
As of yore.

Since all these move on, and give no sign of anguish
While I sigh,
Could it be the tide of living would not languish
Should I die?
But—I live! And shall I overcast the morrow
With a sigh?
No—you fool! Since all of these forget my sorrow,
So can I!

As police reporter I covered the morgue, rushed to fires and disasters. It became apparent that most of these disasters ought not to have occurred. Factory inspection was then very sketchy, workmen's compensation hardly was thought of. Industrial accidents were taken as Acts of God, or came under the Fellow-Servant rule. Helpless girls and men, trapped like rats in cages and burned to death, were just out of luck. There was no law against it.

Such laws as did exist were notoriously ill-enforced. Politicians told about good graft in shaking down manufacturers

under the fire ordinances. In those earliest poems I blamed such things on the devil. Later the blame was put on human greed, official corruption, and the general idea of the worthlessness of human lives as compared to profits. This led, in later days, to violent outcry against worship of the Profit System which sacrifices humanity to income.

At the start of this long development is this called:

THE SACRIFICE

Like sheep in the shambles that bleed,
  Like rubbish that roars in the draft,
We are slain on the altar of Greed
  And burned to the image of Graft.

By wreck and explosion and fire,
  By swindlings, and thievings and traps,
We are robbed—that a stock may go higher;
  We die—lest a dividend lapse.

A wink, and a jest, and a fee,
  And the state's whole duty is met.
Created for slaughter were we;
  How dare we ask more than we get?

So we scream for an agonized hour
  In the smoke and the steam and the flame,
And the State drops a tear and a flower;
  "God willed it—why, who was to blame?"

So the sleek, idle money-lord thrives,
  And the vampire broods fat in his den;
So the dollars pour in—what are lives?
  So the gold gathers fast—what are men?

One of my duties was the covering of women's clubs and societies. Most such organizations, before the day of woman suffrage, were concerned with very trivial matters. When they

tackled a larger problem, it appeared to be done in the wrong way—like this:

TO A FAIR REFORMER

A driver lashed his sullen beast
  With words like sulphur reeking;
His scourging moved it not the least;
  It budged not, for harsh speaking,
But with all four feet spread, stood still;
Blocked streets began the street to fill.

Forth from her stylish carriage came
  A maid with bright eyes flashing.
In holy anger they shot flame
  To see that heavy lashing.
"Stop!" cried she; "or to prison go!
You shall not treat a dumb beast so!"

(Upon her hat, by soft winds stirred
  An aigrette plume doth quiver
Torn bloodily from a mother bird
  While broodlings starve and shiver.
And skins of baby lambs unborn
Line that rich coat so sweetly worn.)

In stinging words of bitter wrath
  She speaks with scornful features;
"How can you wreak such pain and scath
  On one of God's poor creatures?
Are we not parts of one great Plan?
Who does such things is less than man!"

(She has forgot the sealskin sacque
  Upon her dressing table
Ripped from a screaming seal's raw back
  In Arctic winters sable.
The leopard rug upon her floor
Is spotted with the huntsman's gore.)

Her serving-maids know well the weight
  Of that rich anger flaring.
Starved children toil both hard and late
  On garments for her wearing.
—With humble pride she drives away;
A Christian deed she's done that day!

Covering courts—mainly police courts, engendered a great deal of respect for the policemen, but not much for the judges. In higher courts, where arguments were entirely technical, juvenile scorn was wakened by the apparent trivialties on which legal rulings sometimes depend. Once a man was about to be hanged because he could not raise $200 necessary for a transcript of his appeal, although both sides admitted he had an extremely good case. He was, as it turned out, acquitted. Once a man was freed in Mississippi after conviction of murder, because the indictment read:

"Against the peace and dignity of state" instead of "the state".

Out of that feeling of contempt for judicial procedures arose the following: I suppose I could have been tried for contempt of court—certainly I felt it strongly enough.

JUSTICE A LA MODE

Beneath his crimson canopy
The wise Chief Justice sat.
His compeers blinked in solemn row,
Some skinny, and some fat;
Large cobwebs draped across their brains,
But they cared naught for that.

"The case is clear, our finding plain"
The wise chief justice said.
"In ancient rule and precedent
Full deeply have I read.
The well-thumbed wisdom of the law
Joins with me on this head;

"In this presentment of the state,
Page fifty, line sixteen,
A comma is inserted where
A colon should have been.
And here, a purple ink is used;
It should have been of green.

"When that sixth juror signed his name
He failed to dot the i.
The clerk of court wore crimson socks,
The judge, an orange tie.
The jury's verdict is then false;
The sentence is put by."

His comrades bent their solemn heads,
In finding all agreed.
The state's attorney rose in haste,
New documents to read.
"This comes from the accused" he said;
"He has confessed the deed.

"He says he shot his saintly sire,
A preacher, gray and old;
He slew his wife with boiling lead
And ere her corpse was cold
He burned a great asylum down
With loss of life untold!"

The wise chief justice sternly frowned.
"Irrelevant!" said he.
"Such trivial matters vex the court.
No time for such have we.
Your case is full of fatal faults;
The prisoner is free!"

At the close of each day's work, thunder of the presses shook the building and echoed down the narrow length of Camp street, indicating completion of another day's chronicle of good or evil. I used to sit and listen to it on the Picayune, later on the Item, on the Fort Worth Telegram, the St. Louis Globe Democrat, and for many years on the Herald-Examiner and the Herald-American. Everywhere the roar of the press means much the same thing—a kind of inky benediction in basso profundo on the day's work of the reporter. Thinking over the infinite number of stories in each edition, I wrote, with an attempt to reproduce something of the sound:

THE SONG OF THE PRESS

'Tis the roar of the hoarse old ocean
  When the long swells sweep and boom,
And the white gulls scream and flicker
  Where the mist-wet shore-crags loom,
And the deep caves groan and thunder
  And the loose rocks roll and fume.

'Tis the song of a fierce old minstrel
  With a harp of a thousand strings,
Who has fed him fat on famine
  And starved at the board of kings,
And bathed in the flame of sorrow,
  And has wept whereof he sings.

'Tis the call of a strong crusader
  And the boast of a robber knight;
'Tis the plea of a questing lover
  And the clang of a distant fight,
'Tis the toll of countless dirges
  And the chime of joybells bright.

'Tis the loom of the whole world weaving
  Strange webs of a tangled skein;
'Tis the voice of the whole world, chanting
  Deep-toned, with a wild refrain;
'Tis the pulse of the whole world, beating
  'Neath the lash of an age-long pain.

About this time occurred the coronation of Pope Pius X. We printed columns of descriptions of elaborate ecclesiastical ceremonies attending the rite. Pondering them I wrote:

THREE FISHERMEN

Three fishermen stood by the Vatican gate,
  Peter and James, and John,
As the Pontiff went forth in imperial state
  In the glow of an Eastertide dawn;
With bishops in purple and cardinals red,
With golden tiara and jewelled brocade
And a wonderful canopy over his head;
  They were ragged, James, Peter, and John.

And they thought of a head that was circled with thorn
To the cry of "Behold him, your King!"
His robe, though of scarlet, was tattered and torn,
And a reed was His scepter—this King.
"The people are starving amid this display,
And the cry is not 'Love me' but 'Pay, children, pay!'
Can this be His Vicar? What a change, since my day!"
Said Peter, to James and John.

When printed in the Item, this provoked a very strong reaction, partly of indignation and partly of enthusiastic approval. I was warned "Stay off that stuff!"

After two years at the Doanes, I took a room in the French quarter in Orleans Alley, a flag-stone paved lane that runs beside the Cathedral of St. Louis. It was on the third floor of one of those old French-built apartments, with a lace-work balcony on a level with tops of magnolia trees filled with mocking birds.

To get there I walked across Canal street, with its eight lines of street car tracks, into the Vieux Carre; down Royal street, whose sidewalks, or "banquettes" were overhung by balconies their whole length; past the old Hotel Royal, in whose basement at that time still stood the auction blocks whereon slaves had been sold at the time of Abraham Lincoln's visit. Near by was the old house of the Brothers Lafitte, Jean and Pierre, whose pirates helped Andrew Jackson win the Battle of New Orleans.

Houses in the French Quarter were built flush to the banquette, with heavily barred windows and iron-bound doors. In the middle of every block was a huge gateway, with a wicket gate in the middle of big oaken doors. In the center of each such block was a patio, or court-yard. Looking through the wicket gate one caught glimpses of green embowered paradises within; often with fountains, always with palms and vines. One of these wicket gates bore the name of "Dr. Forget." In French it is pronounced, of course, "fore-zhay;" but I liked its English sound.

THE OLD DOCTOR

There's a gentle old Doctor can heal every smart
  Any soul ever suffered from yet—
A wound of the mind, or a stab in the heart;
  His name—it is Doctor Forget.

For failures that sear, or remembrance that stings,
  Vain longing, or vainer regret,
There is panacea for each of these things;
  Call in this physician;—Forget.

You have not a hurt the old Doctor can't cure.
  His like—ah, the world has not met.
His presence is soothing, his remedies sure;
  His balm is his name; just—Forget!

Attainment of the dignity of a column of verse brought a fictitious greatness—with complications. Those Mobile sonnets were seldom seen by any one, least of all by the girls to whom they theoretically had been written. But everybody in town read these verses, and much was the heartburning as to which girl was the subject of this or that effusion. It saved much explanation to look mysterious and say:

"Ah, but that is a secret between you and me. I thought of course YOU would understand!"

One of these disputed poems was:

PORTRAIT OF A GIRL

Wind-blown waves that break and quiver,
  Rippling, glittering in the sun,
Curving, dimpling on the river
  Where the shallows shelve and run,
    Oft hide pools where, clear and deep,
    Brooding sunlight dwells asleep.

Merry moods that glance and twinkle
  Blithe and lightsome in her eyes,
Passing showers that gloom and sprinkle
  Like the tears of April skies
    Mask a spirit pure and true,
    Lit with warm light through and through.

Eyes the hue of wine and honey;
  Cheeks like moss-rose steeped in cream;
Hair that breathes, like meadows sunny
  Perfume faint as flowers adream;
    Mind as clear as sparkling dew;
    Lips that, laughing, tremble too;

Figure dainty, trim and slender
  Like young pimes when south winds blow;
Voice that rings as rich and tender
  As Aeolian chords struck low;
    Never dream so sweet could be
    As this dream, come true to me!

But when any took these sentiments too personally, there was another resource. In among verses addressed to society lasses are a number like

LIZZIE

Forgive me if I turn a bit
  From stately epic measure,
And epigrams of doubtful wit
  To claim your fleeting leisure
    The while I chant a pleasing lay
    About a queen I met today.

Her rule it lasts from eight to eight;
Her kingdom is a kitchen.
An apron is her robe of state,
Her crown, a cap bewitchin'
Her subjects are the men who flock
To grab quick lunches by the clock.

Those smoking stacks she deftly wields
Would make a juggler dizzy.
To her sweet smile each hard heart yields;
Her name—it is just Lizzie.
What if on hash and beans you lunched?
A feast, if Liz your ticket punched.

Here is another of the lunch counter era:

FESTAL ODE

Old Omar sang of roses and of wine.
He loved the ruby daughter of the vine.
In grass-floored gardens, fragrant with the rose,
Drunk as a lord he penned his flowing line.

But I sing of Jess and Gertie,
Lizzie, Yetta, Bert and May,
White of cap and neat of apron,
Bearing high the loaded tray
Where the hot, brown, steaming coffee
Beats Khayyam's brew any day.

Old Hafiz wrote in moonlit meadows rare
Where frenzied nightingales upon the air
Poured forth the luscious burden of their song
While that old sinner kissed white shoulders bare.

But I sing the crowded counter
Where the sizzling sausage dies,
And the air is warm and liquid
With the music of the cries:
"Fry a half!" "One rare!" "Three scrambled!"
"Four small blacks and two mince pies!"

For poets eyes may in fine frenzy roll;
Sage bards may chant rich anthems of the soul;
But nightingales and flowers, moon and song
Are not the summit of my lyric goal
And my dreams are not of roses
When my stomach's full of dents.
So I sing the dwindling ticket—
Thirty meals at twenty cents—
That must keep me from starvation
Till some editor relents!

Valerie Doane was about my age. We used to walk along the levee on Sunday afternoons, gazing at the brown Mississippi, picking daisies and clover-blossoms from the slopes of those strange man-made hills that keep the enormous river from overflowing the town. On one such walk I was teasing her about a dark-eyed youth named Louis, and challenged her to test his affection by the time-honored ritual of a daisy. About this I wrote:

THE LITANY OF LOVERS

Upon a shady streamlet side
Through sunlit meadows hazy
She wanders, lone and dreamy-eyed,
And plucks a nodding daisy.
With tender pink her cheeks do glow,
A smile on sweet lips hovers,
The while she chants, in cadence low,
The Litany of Lovers.
"He loves me" and "He loves me not'—
The Litany of Lovers.

Like devotee who kneels before
A shrine antique and holy,
Her rosary repeating o'er
With reverence hushed and lowly,
She tells the charm, while petals fall,
Which destiny discovers;
That incantation mystical,
The Litany of Lovers.
"He loves me" and "He loves me not'—
The Litany of Lovers.

Like torches of a distant shore
  Across dark waters gleaming,
Her deep brown eyes shine more and more
  With love's own watchfire beaming;
Till as the last leaves fluttering lie,
  All doubts and fears removing,
Her voice exults in paean high,
  In ecstasy of loving;
    "He loves me! Ah, he loves me well!"
      The Gloria of Lovers!

While working on the Item I joined the First Troop Cavalry, Louisiana State National Guard—largely through loyalty to the 11th U. S. Cavalry—and learned to ride a horse, or more accurately, not to fall off a horse. I gathered a little about drill and discipline.

Some of this I already knew from having joined the Alabama National Guard, First Regiment. At one time I had been private No. 1, first squad, A company, First Regiment, Alabama National Guard, which of course is the first state in the union (alphabetically speaking.)

In the cavalry we imbibed a little about drill and maneuvers; not very much, because this troop was the only one in the state, and we could have only company drill. The fact that cavalry and chivalry are the same word induced a poem on Chivalry. It is not as one reader said, "debunking" chivalry. Rather it is exalting the Cavalry.

CHIVALRY

When Arthur Pendragon in Britain was crowned,
'Twas a quarrelsome, turbulent realm that he found.
As a feasible means of preserving the peace,
He started a squadron of mounted police.

By woodland and highway they rode far and near;
No blackguard, nor baron, nor witch did they fear.
They cleaned up in the land in a vigorous way,
And held a big dinner each Pentecost Day.

O Launcelot, Galahad, Tristram, Geraint!
They hunted for trouble, and sang as they went.
They rescued fair princesses, slew giants grim,
Each keen on the job every day brought to him.

Now the glamor of chivalry's vanished away.
Round Table reunions are not held today.
But the age of Knight Errantry shall not be o'er,
Till the need that created them calls them no more.

For the blood of the heroes still burns in us all,
And the fire still leaps white, where the sudden sparks fall.
We lack but the chance to be all of one piece
With King Arthur's Invincible Mounted Police.

There were no women on the staff at that time—except in the society department—but a girl student at Newcomb College was given space as a feature writer—our first. To her I wrote:

TO A GIRL REPORTER

A slip of a girl, with a tricksy nose,
And a hand that is daintily thin;
But it shakes one's soul with the truth it shows
Till he scarce dare look within.

An elf of a girl, with a heart warm-wise
And a laugh like a gurgling spring;
But the world-fire burns in her wide brown eyes
And its chords in her low voice ring.

She has looked in the eyes of Love and Death,
And laughed at their threat and plea;
And she builds grown souls with an artful breath
As the Lord built you and me.

This girl reporter was Fannie Heaslip Lea. The verse was caused by publication of a short story which seemed to have great power of analysis.

I called her "Paquita", which pleased her immensely. She

hated "Fannie," and said her teachers insisted on putting her name down as "F. Lea," which naturally made her hopping mad.

When Paquita spoke enthusiastically about something I had written, I asked if she had praised it as strongly to a rival reporter.

"Heavens, no," she said. "Do you think I would praise one man's work to another man? I may not know much, but I do know better than that."

"How does a girl learn these deep matters?" I queried. "Why don't you write a code for young folks?"

"Why don't you?" she retorted. "You write editorials on national politics—you ought to be able to write guides for people your own age." And she laughed like a little red-headed fiend.

Out of this burning satire evolved the following:

MAXIMS FOR A DEBUTANTE

I. Before Catching

I. Go to thy aunt, my daughter, and be wise;
Guile in thy heart, but in thy face—surprise!

II. Vaunt not thy learning. Twill but make him wroth.
Oft times too many books will spoil the troth.

III. Trust not too firmly in his pure intention.
Necessity's the mother of convention.

IV. Wound not the vanity of thy mannish king.
A little spurning is a dangerous thing.

V. Strike while the fire runs hot;—'twill cool away.
Say not "tomorrow" if he woo today.

II. After Catching

VI. Shun talk of former sweethearts, his or thine.
Snuggle and coo. A kiss at times saves lyin'.

VII. Keep him well fed, though household tasks lie deep
Upon the conscience. Cook before you sweep.

VIII. Preserve thy figure. Sternly curb thy greed,
Lest he disdain thy looks. More waist,—less heed.

IX. Scold not too freely on what gossips saw.
Obsession oft is nine points of the jaw.

X. Be not too watchful. Chains enrage the male.
Remember; Home was not built for a jail.

* * *

She had a sister named Margaret, also with red-gold hair. To keep peace in the family, I printed this:

MARGARET

I threw my troubles in the sea;
They came back on the turning tide.
To drown them in a glass I tried;
They rose up thence and glared at me.

I piled them on a leaping fire
Where rubbish burned, heaped mountains high.
Their choking fumes blacked out the sky
And quenched at last their funeral pyre.

But all my troubles, care and fret
Can buried, hid, forgotten lie,
In one small dimple, sweet and shy
Upon the cheek of Margaret.

Perhaps the rest of the Paquita Cycle should come in here. I grew indignant at her criticisms of young men who try to accomplish something the world, instead of seeking their own prosperity and ease in the "normal manner", so wrote this:

PAQUITA

Perched on your flowered height,
By cool winds fanned from close, immortal hills,
Dream on, Paquita, while calm, mellow light
Softly the warm air fills.

And when, from far below
Harsh clanging outcry swells through dust-choked gloom,
Where hoarse, spent warriors, gasping, charge your foe,
—Look up, where white peaks loom.

From their clear stillness draw
Precept and rule proved true; sing little strains;
Weave lilting, well-trimmed tales, to point the law
In things unseen that reigns.

But when crushed, strong men shout
Or bold, shrill-crying youths, aflame for strife
Leap down amain into the yelling rout
To yield thereto their life

Mock not their hot-mouthed words,
Nor, bending over, keen derision call
To one who tensely wards sharp-swinging swords;
—For singing is not all!

For a time we were engaged, in a sort of way, but then came to the conclusion that this was no time to talk of marriage (I was not yet 20) so I wrote this:

FAREWELL

You do not love me, sweet? then fare you well.
Yes, fare you well, though elfin eyes on me
With troubled brilliance even now do dwell
Like stars that have beheld eternity.
Love dwelt there once, those brooding deeps reveal,
But it was love of love, not love of me.

Bright was the dawning radiance in your eyes;
Rich was the morning glow upon your cheek.
I watched the glory in your bosom rise;
I gloried, when I taught your heart to speak.
I watched—and waited—still my bosom cries.
I have not found the wonder I did seek.

Trembling within my arms did you abide;
Gold hair across my tingling brow was blown.
Your eyes have said "I love." Your lips replied
Though shyly, to the longing on my own.
Still is the heart that craved unsatisfied;
Still is the altar empty, and the throne.

It was the lovely phantom of false day;
'Twas echo, not the substance of reply.
I touched your soul, yet have we fallen away.
I called—your heart made answer to my cry;
Yet has not flaming love in fierce assay
Our lives together fused;—love knows not why.

Yet keep those emblems that you have of me
Keep them like corals from the ebbing brine,
Left on the strand of love's departed sea,
Memorials of a day we thought divine.
Whose echoes in your ear shall music be,
Whose lingering voices shall recall you mine.

Yes, fare you well;—yet shall you not forget.
No—you cannot forget me ever more.
My unremoving presence shall not let
One more unworthy pass your heart's white door.
Upon the portals of your memory set
Henceforth my name shall prove each visitor.

'Tis hard to go; nor can I tarry here.
Yet still some triumph does remain to me;
For like a rose, upon the eager air
That spreads its morning petals full and free,
Although another its full blooming wear,
Young heart, your fragrance blossomed first for me!

In reply I got a furious letter saying she never wanted to see or hear of me again. One can hardly blame her.

She married a Hawaiian merchant, spent some years in Honolulu, which she called "a brown derby town in the middle of the Pacific Ocean" and achieved considerable fame and

much wealth by writing stories about that Pacific Paradise. In one letter, replying to a query whether she were not homesick, out in her Island Paradise, for Broadway and Forty-Second street, she wrote:

"Yes, and for Forty-Third, Forty-Fourth, Forty-Fifth and on up to the Bronx."

Eventually moving back to New York, she began writing about life in these states, in a vein which appealed much more, perhaps because I knew nothing about Hawaii. So I wrote her this sonnet:

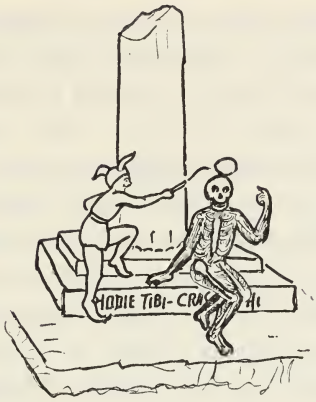
TO FANNIE HEASLIP LEA

Mellow surf-music—magic-misted moons—
  Piled fragrance heavy on soft tropic air;
  Slim girls with flowers ablaze in dusky hair,
Shaking the souls of men love makes buffoons;—

These were your toys. Cooped in your Eden-Isle
  You built tense dramas, passionate but small,
  Angered, because your soul despised them all,
Helpless—because their pathos made you smile.

But now clean winds and cold, hard Northern snow
  Blow through your pages. Back among your kind
  Strong joy runs pulsing in your heart to find
Drama in folks and ways you used to know.

Far-wandering wings fold smoothest in their nest,
Lips better frame old things the heart knows best.



HODIE TIBI . . . CRAS MIHI

It is as the Carnival City that New Orleans is best known. The appellation was derived from her elder sister, Mobile, which justly claims the title "Mother of Mystics," since the Mardi Gras of the Gulf Coast had its beginning there, in this manner:

Shortly after the Civil War a group of young bloods, spirited but impoverished, celebrated New Year's Day with a noisy procession, equipped with cowbells and rakes. This developed into the "Cowbellion de Rakin" Society, thence into the Mardi Gras festival, ruled by King Felix.

In Mobile this festival still is on a comparatively small scale. But New Orleans early took it up and developed it into an empire of mythology.

Perhaps the poetic genius of her Latin strain provides the rich beauty of it, and the Anglo-Saxon organizing genius established its strong structure. Certainly nowhere else in the world is there anything to compare with this once-glorious New Orleans Carnival—a reminiscence of other ages.

Rex, the "Lord of Misrule" represents the Sun, Momus the Moon, Proteus the sea, Comus the earth. Each of the Four Great Gods holds a street pageant culminating in a ball. In

addition there is—or was—a host of lesser divinities, averaging twelve in number, each named after some mythological character, every one holding a masked ball during the carnival season.

This begins on Twelfth Night—Jan. 6—with the ball of the Twelfth Night Revellers. Then follow the Elves of Oberon, Mithras, Consus, Nereus, Osiris—innumerable others that come and go from year to year. Most young men of New Orleans spent all they could scrape together preparing for these gorgeous festivals. Girls, of course, spent the year eagerly angling for coveted positions as queen or maids of honor.

In this world of make-believe I felt very much at home. During previous years instead of following baseball or football scores, and the doings of Diamond Dick and Frank Merriwell—like any normal youngster—I had delved into fabulous narratives of the Greek gods, Norse Aesir, legends of Osiris, the Morte D'Arthur, the Faerie Queene. All that elaborate panorama of poetry seemed to me the natural background of any one's thought.

So reading the list of past subjects of these pageants—Al Kyris the Magnificent, the Crusades, Charlemagne and his Paladins, the Rubaiyat, the Kalevala, the Conquest of Mexico, the Iliad, the Aeneid, the Bhavagad Gita—I thought "Here are my own people."

For nearly five years I reported these annual festivals and pageants. Then occurred an event which influenced deeply all my memories of them.

In Mobile the Order of Myths, chief of the pageant societies, invariably started its parades with a float representing a broken column, around the base of which danced a figure representing Folly, belaboring with a bladder full of dried peas a grisly figure representing Death. Over that black-clad form were white bones as of a skeleton, and on his head he

wore a skull. Across the base of the column were inscribed the words: "Hodie Tibi, Cras Mihi"—"Today thine, tomorrow mine."

In both cities this was the keynote of the celebration, since the Mardi Gras is the day before Ash Wednesday, with its grim warning: "Remember Death."

Late one night the city editor sent me, much against my bitter protests, out on a tip about a night-blooming cereus. It had fourteen blossoms, so the breathless informant said. It "bloomed only once in a hundred years"—(this was a slight exaggeration) and "It might not last till morning."

The address led to a wicket gate in one of those huge oaken iron-barred doors in the Vieux Carre. Opening it to my knock, a girl welcomed me with shy excitement. Her mother, a stately lady, was beside her. They led me to the cereus—a towering growth displaying its wealth of sudden blooms against a wall of pink brick upon which the moon shone brilliantly. A fountain in the center of the courtyard sparkled in the bright, soft rays. There were cascades of climbing roses, swaying in the evening breeze. In the girl's hair joss-sticks burned, mingling their scent with the rich fragrance of that glorious garden.

She had just come from a convent school in France—where New Orleans families of French ancestry sent their daughters, when they could afford it. This new life was full of excitement to her. She was sure this cereus must have bloomed at midnight to foretell some wonderful thing.

To me it seemed the wonderful thing was happening, particularly when she brought her harp—a small-sized instrument for home music—and played for me, there in the moonlight, amid the fragrance of the roses.

The story of the cereus was printed. Thereafter my steps went back many times to the little wicket-gate.

Not long after the "wonderful thing" really happened;

she tremulously broke the news that she was to be one of the Maids of Honor of the Court of the Queen! Was I not proud?

But as Carnival time approached she developed a bad cold. Her mother begged her to forego the honor. But that was something no girl would dream of doing. The Carnival was a cold, wet, miserable time. Pneumonia developed; she died within a week.

"HODIE TIBI . . . CRAS MIHI!"

TEXAS

Shortly afterward I lost my job, and left New Orleans.

A pass to Houston, Texas, was easy to obtain. No opening there, and another pass—they were not difficult in those days—led to Fort Worth. A job on the Telegram kept me in Texas long enough to absorb some, at least, of the Texas spirit.

Although adjoining states, Texas and Louisiana are so different they seem cast in different worlds

In New Orleans, everything had the atmosphere of Gallic aristocracy and old world ecclesiasticism. The very name—New Orleans—brings up the old Orleans, with the flavor of Joan of Arc and the still more ancient reminiscence of the emperor Aurelius for whom it was named. The church dominated everything.

But grandissimes of the old French days, society castes and cliques simply made no sense in the hot, clean air of Texas. Texans never forgot, nor let you forget, that their state had been a Republic, and had joined the Union of its own free will, while Louisiana had been bought and paid for.

One could not live in Texas even for a little while and miss the flavor of the Alamo, which is its heart.

So in Texas, in pursuit of the dream of becoming the American poet, I wrote the Song of the Alamo.

It is too long to quote in full. A few stanzas will give its flavor:

BALLAD OF THE ALAMO

Today in deeper crimson
The Lone Star's glory falls.
Today turns every Texan
To those flame-blackened walls
Where ringed by yelling foemen,
At fearful odds brought low,
The bravest Texans died, to hold
The blood-bought Alamo.

Dictator Santa Anna
On San Antonio came;
The trail of his ten thousand
Burnt wide with corpse and flame.
Dictator Santa Anna
Sent word on to the foe;
"Haul down that rebel flag, or dread
The wrath of Mexico."

A cannon shot gave answer.
Words followed, curt and few;
"Till the last Texan bites the dust
This flag dips not to you."
They called in all their fighters
Who kindled bright campfires
Within the gray old mission
Of dead Franciscan friars.

Inside those walls were gathered
Barely two hundred men,
Full forty times outnumbered;
But what cared Texans, then?
Not one in that bold handful
Of death nor hell had dread,
And each one on his rifle-butt
Had nicked ten foemen dead

* * *

From Louisiana, Bowie
Coughs racked his giant frame
But stretched in bed his lean hand gripped
The knife that bears his name.
God help the shrieking Mexican
Within its reach who came.

. . And all day, grim and ominous
A brooding hum arose
Above the camp, like surf when damp
The blackening storm-wind blows.

All day the staring heavens
Blazed down with sultry breath.
All day upon the sullen clouds
Rode the gray shape of death.
And in the vault above them
A circling vulture hung
And with an evil prophecy
He eyed them as he swung.

* * *

Within across the tumult
Bed-ridden Bowie raged.
Prone on his meager cot he lay
Like a wounded lion caged.
His hair was white with winter
But still his aim was straight
And round him a whole arsenal
Lay primed with deadly hate.

Across his narrow doorway
A writhing barrier grew
Of plunder-hunting Mexicans
Who ranged the long halls through.
Fast his unerring pistols
Spat fire through choking gloom,
And rivulets of crimson formed
Long pools across the room.

With curses mixed with coughing
His last shot sped away
And crouched behind his wall of dead
They killed him where he lay.
But ere his war-torn spirit
With a parting curse had fled
He'd winged a score of Mexicans
To blaze the trail ahead.

And in the Lone Star country
Still is the grim tale told,
And still that stern "Remember!"
Stirs Texas as of old.
God help the cause of freedom,
God shield our land from woe,
That day we all, in servile thrall
Forget the Alamo!

The Texas sojourn was brief. Next came St. Louis.

I had visited St. Louis in 1904, during the World's Fair commemorating the Louisiana Purchase Exposition one hundred years before. I had saved up barely enough money to make that trip—on a railroad pass.

That World's Fair was the last of the really scenic expositions. Chicago's Fairs of 1933 and 1934 were housed in buildings hardly more than shoe-boxes in appearance, lacking even a semblance of architectural splendor.

The St. Louis Fair was a spectacle of unforgettable beauty. It was the first to use color as an aid to the stateliness of its magnificence. Long colonades of ivory plaster against deep crimson walls made a gripping picture.

All Louisiana, naturally, felt a deep personal interest in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Since I had lived for years in one of the old Pontalba buildings, looking down on the Place des Armes—renamed Jackson Square—where the flag of France was hauled down and that of the United States raised aloft, the Exposition seemed very much of a family affair.

In spite of all its gorgeousness, this Fair lost heavily. Nor was there any doubt as to what caused the loss. Control of it was in the hands of "wowsers" — strict Sabbatarians — who passed an iron clad law that the Fair should be closed all day Sunday. The idea was, they said, to show visitors an "American Sabbath". Perhaps there was the secret thought that all these throngs of visitors would be driven into their churches on Sunday.

As a result St. Louisans who worked all week could not go to their own fair; for that was before the time of the forty-hour week. That whole thickly populated area would naturally have attended the exposition on Sunday, if at all. So millions were lost by the Fair and reaped by the wide-open Illinois towns across the Mississippi River.

It had been my intention to make St. Louis the center of another section of the American epic; to tell the story of La Salle and De Soto, of the coureurs du bois who ranged the territory between Quebec and New Orleans, when France ruled all that land. I was going to tell of the Oregon Trail, and the Santa Fe Trail of Coronado and Cabeza de Vaca and of the Civil War.

But none of these themes seemed to fit in with the stately Spenserian stanza. So all there is of it is this threnody over the ruins of the last of the great Fairs, which two years later stood a pathetic laughing-stock. It was many years before the last vestiges of the plaster and wood of the immense palaces was cleared away.

In the center of Forest Park, where the Exposition rose, stands now a bronze statue of St. Louis, king of France, his sword extended in the gesture of the city's motto: "En Avant!" —"Forward!" That motto is all very well; but once in a while somebody also must look behind and pick up the waste.

They had forgotten this necessity.

THE CITY OF ADVENTURE

I

The Magic City

Cold, sodden, lifeless under lowering skies,
  In piteous wreck and desolation low,
The Magic City, shorn of beauty, lies;
  Her heaven-flaming splendor dead in snow;
  Her stately palaces, with many a row
Of statues fair, and ivory colonnades,

Lie heaped in blackened ruin, crumbling slow.
Like magic risen out of forest glades,
To wilderness again the great white wonder fades.

When sudden-spreading darkness like a pall
Smote heavily across that blazing hill,
In all the huge dumb throng that saw it fall
There was no heart but felt a sudden chill.
Men heard not their own sobs, nor felt tears fill
Their eyes, tense-strained to watch sheer Beauty die.
They felt that great heart flutter and grow still.
—For days St. Louis walked as with a sigh;
A joy was gone from earth; a light from out the sky.

Black change could not such wondrous whiteness shroud;
That dwells beyond the power of Time's decree,—
Nor dim, to eyes that wondered and grew proud
The memory of that long-drawn jubilee
Which marked the century of a victory
In peaceful consummation mightier far
Than shrill and sworded conquest hence can be;—
So bright, against the firmament of war
As shine the wings of peace, so shone that dream afar.

Proud empires, rich beyond the dreams of men,
From crown to constellation passed away
At silent stroke of future-laden pen,
Made on the noon of one December day
When all New Orleans thronged in deep array
Around the old Cabildo, and with tears
Beheld the proud imperial lilies sway
Down that tall staff, their throne for glorious years,
And saw an unknown flag blaze high, mid alien cheers.

Then, wilderness rolled wide from Gulf to sea,
By silent rivers pierced; from hills unknown
Plain-swept by snowy winds eternally;
By wandering tribes inhabited alone.
At times, by chance or stern-eyed venture blown
Adventurous Frenchmen through its perils grim

Cleft wonderingly; and far dispersed were thrown
Lone outposts; but those forests huge and dim
Rolled vast, unbroken, still, even to the Arctic rim.

Now—lo the marvel of one hundred years!
Time halts amazed above that teeming plain,
Whose golden harvest throws its rich frontiers
Far to bleak realms where ice and silence reign;
To sum whose wealth the arts of men are vain;
Whose cities, strown like planets in the sky,
Glitter supreme, each in its own domain;
And from whose swelling bosom rear on high
Thirteen imperial heads, in sister sovereignty.

These saw the whole world gather to their call
From high white senate on that circling crest
Beneath whose colonnaded coronal
Equal they sat enthroned, from east to west.
Mothers of men, each bared her ample breast,
Full for the sustenance of all the world.
Rulers of time, their eyes in sovereign quest
Took tribute from all years, whose course unfurled
Before them lay, like seas with placid depths impearled.

For all that man has dreamed, or known, or done,
Since first mankind began to dream or do,
Lay in vast temples gleaming to the sun,
Ensampled there beneath their steadfast view.
From uncouth cave-flints, hacked when earth was new
To air-winged miracles, destroying space,
Born since the gates swung open—there they drew
What men have done, of every time and place,
For Pharaoh, Caesar, State, to crown man's upward race!

Fallen is the City;—all its guests are gone;—
Dispersed its triumphs over land and sea;
Dead the white leaping fountains; sear the lawn;
Shattered the statues; past, the jubilee.
But not remembrance—nor the victory!
Great is the land, which for a season's play
Could rear such shining marvel, and could see
Its glories die again; and greater they
Who laid that broad land's strength, which shall not pass away!

CHICAGO

From St. Louis—fired again—I went to Chicago, pawning my overcoat for expenses. After some weeks of tramping the streets looking for a job, rooming in those 15-cents a night lodging house, I landed as copy-reader on the old Inter-Ocean. When paychecks began to come in, I rented a bare, narrow little room on the South Side at Groveland and 31st for $1.25 a week.

That first Chicago winter seemed terrible. Having spent all my life to that time in a region where roses bloom in December and magnolias in March, this harsh climate, all-pervading dirt and grime, endless noise and total lack of that gay spirit of enjoyment of life, crushed one with its gloomy weight.

In February came occasional news bulletins about the Carnival in New Orleans culminating in the announcement of the choice of that year's Queen of the Carnival. It cut like a scourge.

Picture me than, about twenty, in a shabby rooming house, looking out on a very dirty south side courtyard and alley filled with blackened, rotting snow, ashes and uncleansable grime, while through my desperately homesick memory ran a panorama of the joyous pageantry I had so lately shared—although then it seemed centuries away. All led up to the

pathetic climax that had blasted that revelry with the stern, remembered motto; "Hodie Tibi—Cras Mihi!"

There was no fragrance here, not even in summer. There was no incense drifting round the heads of laughing girls singing beneath the palm trees.

So I wrote:

INCENSE

I was dreaming of New Orleans through a harsh Chicago night
Till the old enchanted city rose before my longing sight;
And its perfume-laden air
Soothed away the sting of care
While I laughed with dark-eyed damsels, burning incense in their hair,
—Burning joss-sticks in their hair
Down the palm-leaved thoroughfare,
While the planets burned like candles, big and golden, lit in prayer.

I am tired of Northern cities, chill beneath their lowering skies;
Tired of florid, twanging beauties—chilly hearts and steely eyes.
Lord, I want to go away
Where the folks know how to play;
Where God sends the sun for sunshine, not for always making hay;
Where the perfume laden air
Soothes at dusk the sting of care
And the girls flit by like fireflies, burning incense in their hair.

There's a gorgeous tropic garden where I dreamed I sat last night,
With a dainty Creole damsel close beside me, all in white;
Sweet her voice was, soft and low,
And I watched her dark eyes glow
As I used to watch and love them, far away, and long ago
When my heart was burden free
And I dreamed that I could be
All as much to her forever as even then she was to me.

I have heard her clear voice ringing down the worship-laden air
While the sacred censers swinging filled St. Louis' dome with prayer,
I have heard its gay refrain
Thrill the waves of Ponchartrain

While the salt Gulf breezes, laughing, tossed far its merry strain;
I have heard her whisper low
To a heart suffused with woe
Till her gentle consolation bade corroding sorrow go.

I have seen her throned in splendor of the Merry Monarch's law
Mid the giddy, glowing glory of the golden Mardi Gras;
I have watched her dark hair gleam
Neath the crown of Rex supreme
While the Great Gods wrapped the City in a whirling gorgeous dream;
I have seen her capped with white
As she labored day and night
When the Fever gripped us grimly, and we conquered it in fight.

Dear to me howe'er I saw her, most I loved to see her there
In the cool palm-shaded darkness, like a tropic blossom rare,
While the perfume laden breeze
Laughed and whispered in the trees
Scattering white magnolia petals in a glad largesse from these—
Kissed her cheek and waved her hair
And the incense burning there
Rose about her, hovering round her like the halo angels wear.

In the garden where I left her, ah, so long—so long ago,
There's a solemn leaved palmetto whispering wistfully and low.
And it haunts me day and night,
Glare of moon and broad noonlight,
And it fills me with a sorrow I can never tell nor write.
Flowers—ah, flowers she loved so dear,
Charm her vagrant spirit near
Till amid your wreaths of incense, I may see her face appear!

Reporters on the street think of the copy-desk as a sort of cage of condemned. But once on the rim, in the chatter and exchange of anecdotes that run around between spasms of editing, one discovers that those who sit there night after night, chopping adjectives and transposing verbs, have dabbled in about everything, and been about everywhere.

On the Inter-Ocean were man who had frozen his nose at Point Barrow, in the Arctic circle, another who had been a captain of the constabulary in the Philippines. Just across from me was a former liquor salesman; beside him a youth studying for the priesthood. There were men who had been in the Spanish War, veterans of the London office; men who had been in India and men who had spent years prospecting for gold in Ontario.

Strange were the stories that eddied and crackled around the rim, while blue tobacco smoke curled up into the glare of the spitting arc-lights, and pencils flew unceasingly over the copy-paper.

So out of this I wrote:

THE COPY READERS

Strong beneath our flying fingers
  Beats the pulse of all the world—
War and love and joy and murder
  All in mad confusion hurled.
Through our mesh of netted lightning,
  Like the spider's quivering strands,
We can feel the earth-nerves tingle;
  Read the hot souls of all lands.

We have tramped the Long Trail over
  From Magellan to Cape Nome;
Circle City, Valparaiso,
  'Frisco, London—are our home.
Earthquake, fever, fire and riot,
  Shipwreck, feud—we've known them well.
For the thing we have not sampled
  You must plumb the depths of hell.

Our from every wild new story
  Faces look some of us know.
Every flash, though weird and gory,
  Smites some chord of long ago—

Till the wanderlust comes on us
And the fever grips again
For the plunge in strange tides rolling
Through far worlds of deeds and men!

Once I was quoting from the Song of the Alamo. A tall, lanky rewrite man overheard it. Sitting on my desk and rolling a cigaret with one hand, he said: "That's my country. Come out and meet my folks." The man was Tex O'Reilly. The folks I was invited thus casually to meet included a little dancing artist, full of elfin gayety. That's how I met your Mother.

But work on the copy-desk ruined my eyes. Copy reading strained them constantly. Moreover, the air in the Inter-Ocean local room was very foul. Also mingling with much older and more seasoned men, I smoked and drank too much. Within two years my eyes long ago weakened by yellow fever, were inflamed so badly that I was warned not to use them at all for a long time.

Back in Mobile, for months I lay around the old rectory all day with bandages over my eyes. Out of this mood of despair—based on fear that my eyes might not regain their vision,—came this Ballad of a Blind Reporter. It seems now a little exaggerated, but it does express what I felt at the time.

BALLAD OF A BLIND REPORTER

O, the aching in the temples
And the stinging in the eyes
And the brain in hot rebellious anger burning!
But vague darkness shrouds and tombs me
And the gray ghosts grinning rise,
And my heart nigh breaks with hopeless, endless yearning.

Gone, the noise and rush and clatter;
Stilled, the pounding, quivering roar;
Dead, the shouting, and the laughter and the swearing;
And the sizzling, spitting arc-lights
On white paper drifts no more
Cast their leaping shadows, purple-gray and glaring.

I'm an exile from my country;
From the strange, mad lands I loved
Of adventure, toil and frolic, feast and starving.
Light of foot—and heart—and pocket
'Cross the continent I roved
With my pencil and my wits a passage carving.

Friend of felon, judge and jailer,
Tramp, archbishop, sport and sage,
Murky wisdom of the streets in dark ways gleaning,
I have set whole cities chuckling;
Roused a mob to white-hot rage;
Caused a myriad eyes to fill with piteous meaning.

Ah, the price of too much seeing;
Through these bandaged eyes of mine
Oft ten thousand other eyes have looked and wondered
On life's pain and toil and sorrow,
Sodden hate, and raptures fine;
Passions swift, and long slow strain of fond hearts sundered.

Heavy price of too much seeing!
Now my forehead throbs with pain
In this dead, dull sickroom silence, heavy-smelling.
And the eyes behind the bandage—
Will they ever see again?
God have mercy on a fool!—There is no telling.

There at home the same old currents flowed round me that had enfolded my infant years. Still the deep chorus of many voices offering praise and prayer sounded under the arching limbs of the live-oak trees. Still the ceaseless procession of births, marriages and deaths passed through rectory and church.

Empires had fallen, new empires were rising on their ruins; wars and pestilences had swept across the world, new tides of life covered their wreckage like new grass on battlefields; but the same candles glowed on the altar, the same hymns sounded. Human life was touched at every point by the healing ministry of the church.

During that year of enforced idleness I helped Father in his round of services by acting as lay-reader, knowing the prayer-book by heart, and finding the large type of the lectern Bibles easy to read.

With his approval I started a chain of small missions in surrounding villages. Some of them have died; some have grown into great parishes with stately buildings, fashionable rectories, and imposing debts.

Greatest thrill was in going to the backwoods, where people had never heard of formal worship, and there discovering the power of dynamic liturgy. Eager, alert minds, never paralyzed by deadening rote of languid custom, felt the spell of common prayer in a way that opened out the splendor of liturgical worship as a communal act in which the group soul speaks to God and to one another concerning things too deep to be uttered in words; only to be expressed by a combination of words and ceremonial drama, hallowed with repeated use.

INSPIRATION

Ah, God, that I might speak! I hear, I see
Thy surging soundless deeps, through clouds Thy light again.
Now on me breaks Thine ageless mystery
Of mysteries the key.
This tuneless groaning of the sons of men
Thy chord of Love resolves to Love again.
Could I unfold what dreams Thy spirit bids me see—
Lo, world, thy destiny!

The thunder of my meaning drowns my speech.
They will not sound through clay, these messages of light.
The splendor of their substance will not reach
Into this grime and rust.
Drunk with pure glory, from their aery height
To stumbling earth brought down, and choking night,
I cannot solve the strife, nor clear the strangling dust
Nor dry—O God!—the tears.

If I might speak, O Lord; if I might tell
The utmost word,—but once—of all that I would say;
Sound forth the cleaving truth that should dispel
One fearful fantasy—
Sin's farthest debt could I triumphant pay.
Send Thy white fire, and burn my sin away!
Death could I overcome, and shake eternity;
—Thy fire, Lord!—Here am I!

I offered myself for the ministry. But the Bishop of Alabama, a savage man, would have none of me.

That fall the way opened to go back to New Orleans to my old desk on the Item.

But its gayety did not seem the same. That haunting, pathetic figure of the little Carnival victim brought too vividly to mind the "Hodie tibi, Cras Mihi" of the Order of Myths.

So I wrote "The City of Dreams". It was the official Carnival poem of 1909. Revised from time to time through the years it still contains much the substance of that first draft.

Shortly after its publication in the Item, a verse in praise of it was printed in the Times-Democrat—an unusual courtesy for one newspaper to extend to another. That stanza was written by some one in Ohio. I do not have the clipping, but I remember the lines well. They ran:

"Joy-breathing poem! Flagon of rich wine
Distilled in your fair quarter of the earth.
Tribute-compelling in its every line,
What gorgeous pageants must have given it birth!
Rex, Momus, Proteus, Comus—how each gleams
Radiant, in radiant sphere; fair City—fairer Dreams!"

So here, because it sums up so much of my life and thought for those years, should come the City of Dreams. These stanzas give an idea of the melodies that chanted themselves constantly in my memory as I drew up the papers and signed the documents

that opened for me by the hand of the Bishop of Louisiana the gates of a theological seminary.

It is too long to print in full.

THE CITY OF DREAMS

Winter comes not, nor binding chill assails,
  Nor fretful cares perplex, nor doubts affright
Here where amid her palms my City dwells
  Beneath warm splendor of her Southern night.
    Time harms her never; she has drunk too deep
    The wine of ageless dreams to yield to age or sleep.

Nine towns lie buried where walled Ilion rose,
  And dusty desolation treads them under.
But still the glory of that singing grows
  Of him whose dreaming woke the world to wonder.
    Through cloud-capped Camelot's tower has crumbled long,
    The Vision there beheld burns yet more clear and strong.

For walls are only builded stone on stone,
  And fall they will if but their base be riven,
While dreams are reared of soul on soul upgrown,
  Immortal with the deathless blood of heaven.
    Though their foundation shattered be and braken,
    Yet firmer stands their strength, yet higher it towers
      unshaken.

* * *

While still in snow the Northern cities lie
  And ice on heart and stream is crusted deep,
Red roses smile beneath her laughing sky
  Wistaria builds a scented bower for sleep.
Fragrant like heady wine her gardens blow,
And love waits not for June, nor songs for March to go.

And I was young when I sojourned there
  And every wind tossed flowers at my feet.
Among the palms her palaces were fair
  And beauty smiled at me down every street.
    And still her name, beloved beyond all rhyme
    Rings richly in my heart—soft, like Aeolian chime.

A garden bloomed there, where my dreams began
In purple nights when every star hung near.
Gay fountains with unending music ran
And trailing roses hid a seat most dear
Where every bloom its sweetest petals chose
To shower upon our heads within a sacred close.

And there was one who waited blossom-wise
—Ah God! How long ago—when I was young.
Those crowding stars peered jealous at her eyes
And fountain-music in her laughter rung.
Life lay before her sparkling, all untried,
Like gardens in spring dawn before their dew is dried.

But all that magic mystery is flown
Nor music echoes now, where fountains sleep.
Dust and broken is our secret throne
And pallid stars across cold heaven creep.
For her, night came ere morning skies had faded.
Her bud too early fell before noon burned unshaded.

Therefore with gladness, mingled with sharp pain,
And keen regret with sweet remembrance woven
I tread those unforgotten paths again
Where once she went with me; when all unproven
The world lay wide before us, ours to choose,
And all paths beckoned free, to follow or refuse.

And ever as these splendors of past fears
Unfold before me in fantastic sheen
My eyes strive hard to pierce the veiling years
To find one face—and all the rest unseen.
This roaring clamor billows past unheard,
The while I strain to catch one whisper—one lost word.

* * *

Hard beat the hungry tides on crag and drift,
But far more strong and hungrier far they rise
In pounding blood and throbbing pulses swift
When kindling seafires leap in cheeks and eyes;
Unending surf of love, whose foam are we,
Borne on its endless roar, as foam is on the sea.

Behind the god his title float appears
  Bearing the legend of some ancient story;
Old Omar's verse, sparkling with wine and tears,
  Writ on the emblem Swirl; the siren glory
    Of Cleopatra on her sphinx upborne,
    Far-towering Walls of Troy, by jealous rage outworn;

Sad Isis, mourning for her lord betrayed,
  Mysterious halls young Krishna reared with song;
Aladdin by his demon-slave obeyed,
  Proud Charlemagne, his paladins among;
    Whatever be the legend he has ta'en
    Forth from its eager peers to front the world again;

Well-chosen from that glory-thronged keep
  Where still they plume their everlasting wings,
Locked by the portals of eternal sleep
  In God's great Temple of Forgotten Things;
    Far through whose solemn ward their golden gleam
    Smites oft the nightly air and sets the world adream.

* * *

Athwart her court quick-shifting colors play
  As though a rainbow cleft its radiant heart
And folded her therein; her scepter's sway
  Set all beneath it gloriously apart
    While from above sweet music strongly showers
    Like winds of fragrant June aflame with breath of flowers.

When—hark!—the muffled sound of pealing chimes
  Throbs through the drunken air; that triple tower
Of old St. Louis sounds the warning time;
  Too soon swift night attains its summit hour.
    With hollow dread the echoing bell-notes smite
    Across the lilting dance, across the mellow light;

And look! The courts dissolve and disappear;
  For chill Ash Wednesday now is ushering in
Stern Lent's "Remember Death" with fasting drear.
  By one and one the banished maskers win
    The gloomy portal of their cave's deep night;
    They vanish, one by one, till none are left in sight.

Never that warning was so hardly taught
  Nor such brief splendor cost so dear a life.
Nor budding rose, slashed with such ruthless knife,
  To ashes and gray dust so quickly brought.
    Her royal robes had ceased not to be warm
    Before the sobbing shroud they folded round her form.

Her kingdom truly lasted but one day
  Yet dies it not, nor can it ever die;
For youth and beauty cannot pass away,
  And Joy, and Love, endure eternally.
    We who have loved may feel its ashes cold
    Form over vanished flame; but Love cannot grow old.

New-wakened love that holds his love in sight
  Sees not her face and form as others see,
But all transfigured in a burning light
  Swathed in a glow of radiant mystery.
    Quivering like vortex of a deathless flame,
    With life and love and hope made real beneath her name.

Their eyes see truly in such wise who see;
  For he who looks, and she who is beholden
Are new-blown buds upon life's ancient tree
  Waves on God's river; chords in a chanting olden.
    Tis not the face we see, the voice we hear
    Which is ourselves; THAT dwells where none but God
      sees clear.

Our lives are shaken by false dreams of God;
  And in our waking all our woes shall wane;
For cliff and wood are visions, sea and sod;
  And fear and hate are dreams; laughter and pain.
    But love grown steadfast, love serene and deep,
    That lives, for that IS GOD, arousing us from sleep.

CHAPTER 3

WAR IN TWO WORLDS

MY brother Ernest, an osteopathic physician, had moved to New York. For that reason I elected to go to the General Theological Seminary in that City, instead of to Sewanee, where my two brothers and cousin had studied theology.

On the night before leaving home, there had been a farewell service at the little mission of Grace Church, Oakdale, where I had served so long as lay-reader. The lesson had been that sixth chapter of Isaiah, telling of his call. So I wrote this—forgotten until my father sent it to me just after Mother died, among a vast sheaf of correspondence of many years:

HERE AM I

(Isaiah 6:8) Then said I: "Here am I—send me."

Thy fields lie plowed for the seed, O Lord,
Seed that is sent by Thee.
Are there no sowers to scatter Thy word?
Here am I, Lord; send me.
Strong is my arm to fulfil any task
So Thou beside wilt be.
Go with me, Master, is all that I ask,
The toil of my hands to see.

The corn lies dry in Thy meadows, Lord,
Thirsting for water from Thee.
It dies for the draught by Thy Spirit outpoured;
Here am I, Lord; send me.
Into the fields of the golden grain
Wherever the wheat waves free.
Joy lies in suffering, glory in pain,
For Thou wilt suffer with me.

The crops are ripe to Thy harvest, Lord,
Ready, and waiting for Thee.
All must be safe in Thy garners stored;
Here am I, Lord; send me.
I am not able this load to bear
But Thou hast strength for me;
Thine be the sending, and Thine be the care;
Enough if I go with Thee.

The coals burn red on Thy altar, Lord,
Kindled with fire from Thee.
Cleanse Thou my lips with Thy flame, O Lord,
So shalt Thou speak through me.
Speak to Thy children, scattered afar
Making them one with Thee.
Long hast Thou called them;—shall they not hear?
Here am I, Lord;—send me!

It was with this sort of utter simplicity of devotion that I boarded the Mallory Line steamship at the Mobile River dock, plowed through the muddy waters of the bay and out into the gulf, and up to the fabled city of New York, where the seminary tower was visible from the pier where our ship made fast.

I entered its ivy-clad gates expecting to find all others moved by the same evangelical passion. As it turned out, I expected too much.

Entrance into the Seminary marked my first actual experience of academic life. From high school I had gone direct into the business of daily toil, there being no money available to send me to college. In those days, working one's way through college was far less popular and easy than it since has become. Besides, my encounters with both students and professors had filled me with a strong conviction that college was a waste of time. For years the letters "B.A." seemed the equivalent of "Brains Atrophied" and "M.A." merely meant "Mentally Addled." One got a much more vivid picture of the facts of life as a reporter than from books, I thought. More than once

I was asked by a professor to lecture to his class on experiences, such as say, during the boll weevil invasion. The invitation was very bad for the cultivation of the Christian virtue of humility.

But after the irregular hours and hectic existence of a reporter's life, the ordered life of devotion and study in the seminary brought relaxation and refreshment. The Holy Eucharist was offered every morning. Morning prayer, evening prayer and litany were said and sung daily according to the Prayer Book. Wide fellowship prevailed among men from the ends of the earth.

But I look back with a feeling of indignation that so much time should have been spent in learning so little. We were in a little ivy-clad island, walled off from the strong and terrible life of the great metropolis boiling and surging around us.

At the start it all was wonderful, like a rest camp after battle. In those first months I wrote this:

SACRAMENT

Round yonder tall black chapel tower
  Now joyous dawn appears,
And tinges with transforming power
  The icicles' bright spears.
Young winds that hymn the morning hour
  Sing keenly round my ears.

Now cassocked forms, by two and one
  With grave, expectant eyes,
Come forth to greet upon his throne
  The Maker of the Skies,
Where He, that spins the stars and sun,
  A pleading victim lies.

But from this splendor of bright day
  Within why should I go?
To kneel amid that long array
  In flickering candle-glow,
And penitent confessions say
  With voice subdued and low?

Here from no lace-fringed altar-height
My Lord looks down on me,
But from the flushed exquisite light
Of cloud-wove tracery,
From ice-gems glittering boldly bright,
From many a frosted tree.

The worlds and all that in them lie
Are sacraments of God;
But fainting souls reach not so high;
Bruised feet must feel the sod.
Therefore, O Light of cloud and sea,
An inward dawn Thou makest.
To multitudes astray for Thee
Unfailing bread Thou breakest.

Inconstant smiles the budding day;
Rough winds may rave full soon.
If in bright dawns my faith I stay
New gods must save at noon.
Except the sun within me shine
Rare mornings flame in vain;
If wells of hidden joy be mine,
Splendors suffuse the rain.

Within! Within! Thy presence there
Shall never scorch nor leave me.
Tempests may fright the riven air,
Winds veer and friends deceive me.
But if Thy life, O God, I share,
Not death nor hell can grieve me.

When this was published, Dr. Roper, professor of dogmatic theology, who later became a Canadian archbishop, came to me after class, with the poem in his hands. He kept repeating over and over, in an astonished voice: "I never thought of that! I never thought of that!"

A sudden violent attack of appendicitis—the third—struck me on an Easter morning, when I was assisting in a church in

Brooklyn. Hurried to St. Luke's hospital, I underwent an operation. During the recovery I wrote:

SPRING DAWN

(Through a Hospital Window)
In yonder garden dim I see
  New-budded censers swing,
While dimly burn on bush and tree
  Green candle-flames of Spring;
And to the dawn-wind's minstrelsy
  The waking warblers sing.

Now holy water, fresh and pure
  Asperges from the sky.
Old earth receives that cleasing shower
  With new-forgiven sigh,
And her deep prayers, told hour by hour,
  Float visibly on high.

Yon little herald morning-star
  As acolyte appears.
The world, with silence spreading far
  His heraldry reveres,
And each of all the things that are
  For miracle prepares.

Now filmy curtains of the East
  In splendor wide unfold.
The Sun comes forth, a royal priest
  In vestments white and gold,
His solemn daily Eucharist
  Triumphantly to hold.

And lo! that Life whose will and power
  The Universe sustain,
That speeds the pulse of age and hour
  And throbs in wind and rain,
Incarnate is in grass and flower,
  In Tree, and Grape, and Grain.

Life slowly resurging within me peered delightedly at life reappearing in the world outside.

One of the monks at Holy Cross, in a discussion on the miracle of growth, said: "If we come down to it, the mystery of transubstantiation is there, too. Study any flower or any fruit. Underlying all you will find God, and nothing but God."

I asked, "Why, then, shouldn't we place flowers or grass on the altar, and reserve them in the tabernacle?" He replied: "They would wither. The Host remains the same."

One night a group of students sat up well after midnight talking about our varied experiences. Some had been railroad men, some had worked in mines. Others had been newspaper men, salesman, surveyors, accountants, farmers.

Next morning in the early light, when rows and rows of those black-robed forms knelt silently to receive the sacrament together, a vision struck upon me—one of those instantaneous perceptions that changed one like a seal pressed upon melted wax. It seemed I could realize all the other altars throughout the world, from Arctic to Antarctic, including all races and nations, extending through all ages; a widening ring stretching out from Calvary and encircling the world many times, like a wave crossing and recrossing a pond, accelerating, instead of diminishing, its sweep. The vision was almost a physical experience. Out of that instantaneous glimpse I wrote this poem, "The Chalice."

The "slave-market" verse refers to the fact that the Anglican Cathedral in Zanzibar is built on the site of an old slave-market.

Into these verses went recollections of stories told by missionaries from all over the world; from Alaska, the Philippines, Africa, the Western Plains, Asia, the far corners of our own country. Into it went some of the meaning that flowed later into the Sangreal.

THE CHALICE

From many a trade and venture
On every clime and sod,
We throng before Thine altar
To drink Thy blood, O God;
That wine whose burning crimson
Sets weakling souls aflame,
And blinds them with its mounting fumes
To fear of death or shame.

Through world-veins dry and weary
That quickening current flowed
Since His great heart, that pulsed it,
Broke on the splintery rood.
Men drank, and rose immortal;
In His death found their life,
And sprang, suffused with mighty song
To join His world-long strife.

They have pulled down the mighty
From many an ancient seat,
And on the neck of lord and king
Have set the Laborer's feet.
They scourge forth shark and tyrant
And cleanse the vampire tryst;
They build on old slave-markets
Cathedrals of our Christ;

They move against an empire
In bands of three or four;
They die in rack and torture
And still press on the more—
Filled with that high unreason,
The madness of the saints,
That scorns to reck of let or foe,
That stumbles not, nor faints;

Stung by an ancient fury
That hungers hard to die;
That holds the thing impossible
The one thing fit to try;

That loses life to gain it,
  That conquers by defeat,
Whose hardest foe is victory,
  Whose hunger is its meat.

In yonder silent chalice
  What rushing torrents lie
That blazed through veins a-quiver
  With mortal ecstasy!
Caught in that soaring current
  Of souls to God swung free,
—How small a thing seems Life-and-Death,
  How great, His friend to be!

Soon we discovered that the whole Scripture really is a love-story. In the Old Testament the church—Israel—is represented as a bride false to the husband of her youth, straying after other lovers who bought her with presents of crops and gold. The New Testament represents the Church as the spotless Bride of Christ. The whole Bible culminates in the wedding feast of the Church Redeemed and the Lamb of God. So I wrote:

GOD'S WOOING

God is the Loom, the Weaver, and the Wove.
  All these wild forms that blaze and change and die
Are but rich vesture of His changeless love
  Which burning pure behind them all doth lie.
    Whose pulse throbs hard beneath its glittering sheen
    With infinite desire that He be loved again.

Where burns the love that will not prove its power?
  False beats the heart that dare not test its claim.
Wherefore He tries, and sifts, and waits each hour;
  Therefore exults if one but call His name,
    Eagerly watching since all time began
    To catch the first faint glow of His own fire in man.

There is naught true in all the world, save He;
Naught real in life but Love; no sin but Hate.
All wrong must perish—fade like smoke away.
Stronger He grows with every shock and beat.
We but endure while clouds black out the sun.
The sun creates the clouds; they serve Him, every one.

Athwart all clouds the Rainbow burns on high.
In fiercest fire the purest gold He tries.
From pain come tears; from suffering, sympathy.
There is no proof of love, but Sacrifice.
From fire and cloud, tempest and dust and blood
He builds the Soul of Man, the chosen Bride of God.

Oh the great longing of His heart! that drove
The kingly Wooer of that faithless Soul
To doff his power, and stripped of all but love
Plunge where she gasped, faint in this prison-hole;
Cleave the black gloom that hid from her the sky,
And fire the failing flame of her divinity.

Now by each soul that loves through stress and storm;
By every heart that prays though bleeding sore;
Earns others' safety with its own deep harm,
Dies with a smile that others may live more—
—O thou eternal Lover; thou shalt free
The soul of Man Redeemed;—a bride well meet for thee!

Harpers Magazine accepted this poem in 1910, and sent a check for $20. My pride and confidence knew no limit. I purchased copies of Harpers magazine for months—for years—to see the poem in print. To diffident inquiry why it never appeared, they explained they had not yet found a hole in a page the poem would exactly fit.

I showed the proof to our professor of dogmatic theology —a substitute for Bishop Roper. The substitute peered through his thick-lensed glasses, read it through.

"Well, sir"—he said, shooting his false teeth out and recapturing them by a dextrous twist of his pendulous lower lip—"well, sir, at the moment I cannot see anything in them to which I would object."

My verses did not seem to click any better than his false teeth.

Fascinated by the Old Testament I began a series of ballads, like the Song of the Alamo, about David and his gang of freebooting warriors who rescued the Hebrews from slavery to the Philistines and laid a foundation on which the glorious prophets could proclaim their burning truths.

The idea was to have a frontier preacher sing the stories of the Old Testament heroes to his banjo, which resembles the harp on which the Sweet Singer of Israel accompanied his warlike minstrelsy. It never got very far; I supposed it shocked the academic consciousness of my very proper fellow-students.

It began thus:

THE SINGING ELDER

There was a circuit rider
  All children knew full well.
We called him "Singing Elder"
  And loved to hear him tell
The story of salvation,
  Man's hope, and fear, and woe,
While twanging on the silver strings
  Of his well-beloved banjo.

For when the hymn was ended
  And one had led in prayer
He'd take his well-loved banjo
  And tune it up with care.
Then standing by the pulpit
  With chords played deft and strong,
He'd chant the Gospel story
  In rhymes of sacred song.

So now he took his banjo
  And tuned it up with care,
And ran his fingers through his beard
  And tossed his long white hair.
Then while we sat expectant
  With smiles and listening gaze,
He'd tell the stirring story
  Of King David and his days.

There were two; King David and his Mighty Men, and the Well of Bethlehem. The second tells the story of how David's Mighty Men risked their lives to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem.

But David on his sheepskin rug
  Laid down his diadem
And cried: "Lo, is this water
  From the well of Bethlehem?
Nay, this is far more precious;
  God make me sore amends
If I should drink the life-blood,
  The life-blood of my friends!"

Children always liked these ballads, but our professors did not. Personally I side with the children.

An appealingly human picture of Jesus was drawn by Prof. C. C. Edmunds, who taught the New Testament. From it came this:

AT NAZARETH

In Joseph's shop at Nazareth
  How swift the shavings flew;
When over fragrant cedar boards
  The plane of Jesus drew,
And fashioned for his Father's eye
  The long planks trim and true.

Round Mary's door at Nazareth
  How clear the singing rose!
When weary with the long day's toil

They grouped at even's close,
And strong the sound of David's hymn
Swelled ere they sought repose.

The synagogue at Nazareth—
How bright its stillness grew!
When through the portal Jesus brought
James, Joses, Simon too,
And led their voices in the psalm,
And watched them in the pew.

The tidings flew at Nazareth
Through white streets, quick and wide;
"Annas hath taken Mary's Son
And He is crucified!"
While old men wagged their wise gray heads;
"What said we? Hah!" they cried.

Behind the town of Nazareth
The hill stands, steep and high,
Where furious neighbors dragged Him once,
While kinsmen shouted "Die!"
And now, while heathen hail Him Lord,
Shall Christians crucify?

Daily we companied with the august dead, not only pondering what they had written, but fingering the very tomes they wrote. That seminary's library is full of vellum volumes that graced many an ancient cathedral or abbey library of the Old World.

In the quiet of that reading room we followed the thoughts of long dead sages and saints—Chrysostom, Ambrose, Gregory, Aquinas, Augustine. This orchestra of the tombs seemed to be striking an insistent note of modernity. These saints had a very up to date way of attacking with considerable violence the evils of oppression and wrong the prophets had assailed—just those evils whose echoes rang with mounting intensity from beyond our placid, ivy-covered walls.

There was a strong echo of the burning oratory of Isaiah and Micah in the report of the American Bar Association that year on "The Purchasability of the Law."

Against the white idealism that had given rise to "The Chosen Nation" these evils took on a darker tinge. Under the lash of the bitter invective of the prophets of Israel against the judges and princes of their own day as "companions of thieves" this poem took form:

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Behold the Chosen of the Lord of Hosts—
  America, our Mother, is her name.
Long ages kept He clean these virgin coasts
  To cradle her;—how quick she turned to shame!

Stored wealth of all the world's soul-treasury
  Free for her royal birthright has He given,
And looked for her His messenger to be,
  To speak on earth the truths He told from heaven.

Now therefore, O our Mother! who are these
  That mock thy proclamations to a lie,
Auction thine honor, market thy decrees,
  Scourge, in thy name, those who for justice cry?

Thy babies—look! on Moloch-altars burn;
  Thy daughters—see!—for hire of hell are sold.
Thy sons to bloody sacrifices turn,
  Mad in the temples of the calves of gold.

These raucous carrion-hounds that guard thy laws
  Scream for the eyes of them their snares have slain.
Day-pious thieves that pray with dripping jaws
  Offer smooth tithes that reek with murderous stain.

Up from this den, Our Mother! seek the skies!
  The stars and winds are clean, that call to thee.
What, shall Truth's Messenger speak purchased lies?
  What, shall God's chosen take a harlot's fee?

In my senior year occurred one of the ghastliest tragedies in industrial history, when 147 clothing workers, mostly young girls, were trapped by fire on the sixth floor of a factory building, and plunged to their deaths on the concrete sidewalk below. The iron doors of the factory were locked by the employers "to keep them from idling."

The coroner's jury found that these 147 fire victims had "committed suicide"—and therefore no insurance need be paid. The owners of the death trap were held guiltless.

That hideous decision set me afire. I began attending labor forums, Socialist party meetings, rallies on behalf of the unemployed, protest meetings demanding protection of life and limb for workers. Such action seemed a natural outgrowth of the warm human sympathy displayed by Christ and the church fathers. But it met with cold aversion and puzzled hostility on the part of faculty and fellow students. The more they shunned me the madder I got. Out of this came the poem "IT WAS SUICIDE", published in the New York Call.

IT WAS SUICIDE

One hundred and forty and seven—
They screamed, all aflame, as they died.
Now the Law its just verdict has given,
And we know it was plain suicide.

We saw the burned bodies piled deep,
We saw how the gutters ran red;
How the sidewalks were smashed by their leap,
How the doorways were choked with the dead.

"Their blood is upon their own souls"
Says the Law—"Themselves were to blame.
Weep not for these ignorant fools;
By their own wilful fault the end came."

For the Harlot has gathered her hire,
The State for these corpses is paid.
They were poor—these that died in the fire;
Says the State: "Are they not better dead?"

Shortly afterward, the church of St. Thomas, on Fifth Avenue, dedicated its $5,000,000 structure of marble, glittering with brass and carved wood. For this occasion I wrote:

TEMPLES

In temples of cedar and stone
  Would ye kennel me down?—saith the Lord.
The vault of the skies is my throne,
The winds and the seas are my own;
  Shall I crouch to these holes, at your word?

In vanity built ye these towers;
  For pride have ye tinted this glass.
There is blood in the heart of the flowers
That nod on this altar of yours;
  Would ye bribe me with tinsel and brass?

In kennels of cedar and stone
  Will ye chain me blindfold?—saith the Lord.
Shall I dwell through the week here, alone,
Bribed, bound, while ye plunder mine own,
  Fooling me with your seventh-day word?

Hark! the screams of the widow and child
  You have slain drown your hymns!—saith the Lord.
This "holy place," gilded and tiled,
With the blood of my poor is defiled.
  Kindle fire!—I must cleanse!—bring the sword!

Nor could I attend services in these fashionable parishes —still less assist in conducting them—without a sense of the violent contrast between them and the slum conditions prevailing in the industries from which all this wealth was drawn.

THE PRICE

As she dreams on the play with a tender face
  My Lady is wondrous fair,
Mid the billowy grace of her foamlike lace
  And the jewels that glitter in her hair.

(They were bought by her sire from the half-paid hire
Of the girls he had starved into shame;
And that gossamer, spun like a cobweb in the sun
From the Loom of the Lost Souls came.)

'Tis a placid prayer My Lady tells
As she kneels in her pew's dark hold;
And the cross that dwells where her white breast swells
Richly gleams with rubies set in gold.
(They burn dark red with the cheap blood shed
On the teeth of a flawed machine,
Where weary girls stand, with their lives in their hand
All day, with no guard between.)

* * *

Like a perfect flower My Lady grows
Bowered soft from the storm and the cold;
And her sweet soul glows like a priceless rose
Whose petals fragrant honey-dew enfold.
(But the nectar she sips with contented lips
Drained many a life's cup dry;
And the rich mould-heap where her roots strike deep
Is the hell where her stricken sisters lie.)

* * *

Those were the days of private armies of great corporations. Armed guards killed workers with impunity. "Agents provocateurs" joined unions for the purpose of egging them on to commit unlawful acts, and thus bring all the force of the law to crush them. Against this I wrote in hot rebellion such poems as "The Reckoning."

Civil war in fact was raging over the country. Places named in this ballad are those of savage conflicts—largely forgotten now.

THE RECKONING

Still longer grows the black account
You write with fingers red,
Masters! who grip at powers that slip
With steel, and rope, and lead;—

The blood's still wet at Calumet
  Your midnight bullets shed.

Not yet, not yet, do we forget
  The sidewalks smashed and red
Where by the locked Triangle door
  We piled our bloody dead;
In sullen streets of Paterson
  The children still beg bread.

Those bloody hells of Lawrence cells,
  The dungeons and the doles;
The stable walls at Little Falls
  That hid our prison holes;
The club and jail and spike and flail—
  Their scars are in our souls!

Yet for all these, and tenfold more,
  Vengeance is not our cry.
God's hand shall bring the reckoning
  When you, who hate, shall die;
Red, red the dawn;—but lo, the Day
  Brightens across the sky!

* * *

In that desperate battle, racial lines and creedal distinctions were ignored. Gentiles and Jews, Catholics, Protestants and men of no religion, all got equally cold, equally hungry, equally despondent. All flamed with the same fierce hope at this message of better things to come.

At one great meeting during the silk strike at Paterson, N. J., Big Bill Haywood was addressing an audience of some 23,000, including workers of every nationality. At least 27 different racial origins were there—Syrians, Armenians, Galicians, Russians, Turks, Croats, Germans, English, French, Irish, Welsh, Italians, Spanish, Portuguese and some of which I had never head. He proclaimed the Industrial Workers of the World as a super-national gathering of the "creators"—the productive workers—of every country and every race.

With a catch of breath I said to myself:

"A great multitude that no man could number, of all nations and languages and kindreds and tongues—"

This is from the Book of the Revelation, describing the Day of Judgment.

The Jews—most of them Orthodox—called me "goy" and "gullach" meaning Gentile and priest. Sometimes, when I spoke at meetings on the Lower East Side to gatherings exclusively consisting of Jews, some spat at the name of Jesus, but I was too full of my new faith in brotherhood to protest.

GENTILE TO JEW

There is a chasm that between us lies,
  Two thousand years and more of ancient hate,
Two alien races, known but to despise,
  Hostile tradition's deep impelling weight.

Yet there is that which deeper than a creed
  Dissolves their enmity in fiercer fire;
Of one Humanity's despairing need,
  And one Divinity's supreme desire.

Though storm-tossed waves on ocean surface roar
  And crossing waves chafe up a wrathful foam,
Yet deep beneath, where strong, pure currents lie,
  The waters flow united in their home.

In September of 1912 the Socialist Party held a rally in the old Madison Square Garden to ratify the national ticket headed by Eugene V. Debs for President, Emil Seidel of Milwaukee for vice-president. That huge hall was packed and jammed to its topmost rafters with a fervent, singing crowd, wrought to a high pitch of exultation. Newly converted to Socialism and only recently a member of the party, I was one of the body-guards who tried—in vain—to protect Debs from the crowd. Wherever a hand was held out to him, he dashed us aside and grasped the hand. It was harder to control Debs than to control the crowd.

None who heard him speak will ever forget that tall, gaunt, bald-headed figure, with long arms stretched out and perpetually vibrating, reminding one of a huge benevolent bird hovering over his audience whether it numbered half a dozen or twenty thousand.

When he died, Oct. 2, 1926, this poem was published in the Herald-Examiner:

EUGENE V. DEBS

With bosom bared and empty hands,
  All weaponless, except for love,
He stormed the holds where hate commands,
Clove war clouds blasting all the lands,
  And left the stars unveiled above.

Where any suffered want or wrong,
  There in the dark he stood revealed.
He lifted all he stood among
For fire that flamed upon his tongue,
  And hovering hands that blessed and healed.

Riches and honor thrust aside
  He chose his own from shop and soil.
His heart's great mansion opened wide,
And all who dwelt there walked with pride,
  Knights of the chivalry of toil.

His name shall stand when names of kings
  Forgotten sink in blackening night.

Still clear and true his warning rings:
"Put not your trust in dying things—
They live, who battle for the right!"

THE SANGREAL

Those were the days of the emergence of the "New Humanism"—a religion holding mankind is all the God there is; that heaven is within us, and there only. This seemed to involve the correlative proposition; that hell also is within us, and from what I knew of humanity, that hell outweighs heaven.

So to set forth this concept; that those who idolize humanity, its aspirations and hopes, are locking themselves into a torture cell from which they have cut off all hope of escape, I wrote "The Sangreal."

In my father's study I had read The Age of Chivalry, Morte D'Arthur and Idylls of the King. On this foundation of the bed-rock of English poetry I essayed to build a structure of poetry embodying the hopes and ideals of the budding day, foolishly taking for granted that every one was familiar with the Arthurian cycle.

Reading English history I found solid fact lying behind all this song. There was indeed an Arthur, left as commander in chief by the Romans when they withdrew their legions, about the year 444, to face the peril of the Northmen attacking their empire across the Rhine and the Danube. The name Arthur seems to be the Latin rendering of the Gaelic "Ard Righ", or High King. There may have been more than one Arthur, a chain of Christian generals who held the post of "dux bellorum" as the Romans called their general of the armies.

This Arthur—one or many—fought the pagan Northmen with such good effect they converted them to Christianity. When Augustine landed in Britain and Patrick in Ireland they found bishops and clergy and an ancient church.

Christianity had been planted in these isles even while Christ lived and taught. His favorite resort was Phoenicia, where he

found a much more ready welcome than in Judea. Phoenicia lived by sea traffic. As far back as the time of Solomon ships of Hebrew and Phoenician merchants traded regularly with these "islands beyond the sea". Some who had heard Jesus speak told the story in these islands.

Joseph of Arimathea buried the body of Jesus in his own new tomb because he was his "goel" or Redeemer, being the eldest male kin of the Savior. Upon this goel the duty devolved of seeing that the dead kinsman did not remain without a sepulchre. I found that in Glastonbury, once called "Isle of Avalon"—there is a continuous record of the bringing of the Holy Chalice there by Joseph of Arimathea. Abbey records chronicle the finding of the tomb of Arthur there.

So I wove these hopes of world betterment on the wreckage of its ruin into this play "The Sangreal".

In the first act, Launcelot returns, disguised, from a three-year quest, reaching the castle of King Arthur on the morning of Pentecost just as the court is going into the Cathedral for Mass. He and Queen Guenevere remain in the Garden, their love-talk accompanied by the sound of chanting in the Cathedral.

GUENEVERE

My knight, my knight, my knight! Hast thought of me?

LAUNCELOT

Lady, what chains could keep my thoughts away?

GUENEVERE

For three long years my eyes have sought for you
And found you not.

LAUNCELOT

By my heart called across the parting gulf,
Could yours not hear its cry?

GUENEVERE

Ah, but what good a cry, to one who thirsts?
Yea, venturing to the world's extremities

An empty desert you have left at home,
Now here you were, now half across the world—

LAUNCELOT

And there I spread the fame of Guenevere—

GUENEVERE

O, but, my knight, what worth is fame to me
With you not near to share it? Know you not
No woman cares for fame, or wealth, or jewels,
Except to make herself more lovely in
Her true love's eyes—or to make her forget?

LAUNCELOT

How could you be more lovely in my eyes?

GUENEVERE

And all the weight of fame you crowned me with
Made me more hungry for your eyes to see.
Nor never knew I where nor how you were,
What kingdoms winning, or by what princess won—

LAUNCELOT

Rich lands, proud marvellous kingdoms I have seen
But never one would I consent to rule
Since I was crowned king of a lordlier realm,
The heart of Guenevere.

GUENEVERE

You could have been a king?

LAUNCELOT

I am a king.
My father was the king of Brittany
Whose throne was foully seized by Claudias.
I could have driven him out and crowned myself,
And been a king, even as your Arthur is,
Save that I could not then be Guenevere's knight;
And so I cast away a crown for you
And gained most wondrous richly by the exchange.

ARCHBISHOP (Within, chanting)

Dominus vobiscum.

CHOIR

Et cum spiritu tuo.

GUENEVERE

In those three years, through all those wondrous lands
How many wondrous maidens have you seen—

LAUNCELOT

Not one, that could compare with Guenevere.

GUENEVERE

O how know I that Launcelot has been true?

LAUNCELOT

My loveliest one!

GUENEVERE

And there's not one, but for his name alone
Would count dishonor glory, in his arms,
—From what sweet midnight treasons have you come?

LAUNCELOT

Treasons! Lady, how comes this word from you?
I have most often found they who are traitors
First raise the cry to hide their own misdeeds.

GUENEVERE

O Launcelot! O do not so misjudge me!
You have been gone in glorious chivalry
While I was cooped up here, and ate my heart out
In longing, and in loving, and in fear.

LAUNCELOT

In long lone nights beside the starlit road
When pillowed on my saddle awake I lay
While keen winds swept the firmament above,
I pondered much upon this love of ours.
In each man's deepest soul some fire is sowed
That drives him ever on against all ills
Unto his great desire. So it be power,
Love, wisdom, justice, wealth—tis incomplete;
Man in man's self no comfort finds, nor praise.
But to each man God, to achieve His will
Has summed up every lacking quality,
All beauty, sweetness, wonder, grace and truth,
And made of them—a woman. And each man's heart
Seeking its own, upon one woman rests,
As does the sailor, through wild stormy seas

Guide by one star . . . And this you are to me.
As easy might the soul of Launcelot
Destroy itself, as on another fix,
Forgetting Guenevere.

GUENEVERE

Forgive me, Launcelot.

ARCHBISHOP (Within, chanting)

God spake these words, and said: Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

CHOIR

Kyrie eleison

GUENEVERE

Ah, did you hear? God never gave that law
To any woman's heart. O I have bowed
Before the altar, and to the God there throned
I tried to pray. But ever would my heart
Rebel against the false acknowledgement
And worshiped—you!

ARCHBISHOP

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

CHOIR

Kyrie eleison.

LAUNCELOT

Sweet pagan! With a kiss such blasphemy be hushed.

GUENEVERE

Now have you given my lips new cause for their idolatry.

LAUNCELOT

Why does he speak in English, and not Latin?

GUENEVERE

Tis Arthur's plan, that knights may know the Law.
It comes now with the triple weight and power
Of king, and church, and God. Hear, and obey!
(She stands with upraised hand pointing to church.)

ARCHBISHOP

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

GUENEVERE

(Cowering, hands to ears)
O God, that awful word!

LAUNCELOT

What difference can a word make to our love?

GUENEVERE

But that word is God's law.

LAUNCELOT

How can it be?
If God is love, then our love came from God,
And cannot then be evil; for how can He
Condemn His own?

GUENEVERE

Not—not adultery!
I never thought it so! O God have mercy,
I thought but of myself, my happiness,
My right to live—to love: I never thought
That womanhood is more than Guenevere.
This love is evil—and we are both condemned!

LAUNCELOT

What shall we care?
There is no heaven outside of these your arms,
There is no hell, if you be there with me.
What joy could you or I in paradise find
Alone? or wandering ever desolate
In solitary pain through empty heaven?

GUENEVERE

O, that is true! What if in deepest hell
We both were plunged, where ever burning fire
In torment locks the hopeless, screaming souls.
Those fiery scorching surges would but drive
Me closer to the shelter of your love.

LAUNCELOT

And in the sacred circle of our arms
No pain could pierce but to be soothed away
But one kiss—such as this!
(Kisses her)

ARCHBISHOP
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife!

LAUNCELOT (Starts away)
God! that was said to me! My neighbor's wife!
And if my neighbor were my friend—my king—
Should it not make damnation triply sure?

GUENEVERE
O Launcelot, have you turned so quickly from me?
You have but said that were no pain, with me!

LAUNCELOT
But if that hell should rage within myself,
And if myself my own damnation be—
Then how should I escape the quenchless fury
Of my own soul on fire?

GUENEVERE
What are you saying?
You do believe in heaven—and in hell?

LAUNCELOT
I do believe—in hell.

Guenevere finally drives him to swear that he loves her only, and has never loved any other woman. This is known to be untrue, for the fact has been revealed that Launcelot has a son by Elaine, princess of the Sangreal. The knights know Elaine is dead, and that the son is Galahad and is expected at the court this Pentecost. But Guenevere does not know it, until she finds the name of "Galahad, son of Launcelot," on the list of those to be knighted.

In fury she taunts Launcelot at the banquet, until he, maddened and amazed, seizes the opportunity of the appearance of the Holy Grail at the dinner to vow that he will take its quest. Guenevere, discovering too late that Elaine is dead, tries to recall him, but in vain.

Guenevere accidentally poisons a visiting Irish minstrel at the feast. His brother, Mador, demands trial by combat. The King sends out messengers to find Launcelot, since the penalty for poisoning is death by fire.

Meanwhile Launcelot has taken refuge with Galahad in a hermit's cell, the hermit turning out to be the brother of Elaine, Launcelot's child-wife. He is therefore uncle of Galahad. Launcelot takes a vow to continue the quest, and not turn aside for any cause. A page dashes in with news that the queen is in imminent danger of being burned alive. Launcelot disregards his oath, strikes down Galahad, and starts madly for the court.

He dashes into the trial just as Arthur, about to take the sword in his wife's defense, has been warned by the archbishop that he will be killed, and to prevent this the archbishop pronounces a major excommunication on the whole land, if the king lifts up his sword.

Launcelot, plunging into battle with Mador, kills him, and declares war on Arthur.

In the concluding act, Arthur has been killed, and Launcelot is king. Guenevere hearing that both are dead, takes the veil as a nun and then, as a nun, confronts Launcelot across the body of Arthur.

GUENEVERE

They told me you were dead!

LAUNCELOT

What mean these robes? What means this hanging veil?

ARCHBISHOP

She is a nun. You dare not touch her, king!

LAUNCELOT

You have not sworn irrevocable vows?

GUENEVERE

But what weight are such oaths? I thought you dead,
Come, take me, Launcelot!

ABBESS. What words are these?
You are the bride of heaven.

GUENEVERE

Heaven would not have
A bride so all unwilling. Launcelot,
Is your love drowned in all the seas of blood
You shed to gain it?

GUENEVERE

Lady, I am king!
Shall I begin to rule unhappy Britain
By ravishing a nun?

GUENEVERE

Coward, are you afraid of this gray priest?
Why, Launcelot, all these years we two have loved
While I was still the wedded wife of Arthur.
Why do you spurn me now? Am I unfit
Because I yielded when 'twas you who wooed?

ARCHBISHOP

Peace, peace! What, shall a nun use words like these?

LAUNCELOT

There is a fearful power in this gold circlet
Stronger than brazen chains. Tis not an honor
It is a prison cell.

GUENEVERE

So Arthur spoke,
And you—you called him coward, and made war.

LAUNCELOT

But now, with this cursed crown on my brow,
I know what Arthur meant.

GUENEVERE

Will you condemn me
To live a prisoner in this funeral gloom
With sickly candles and incense all my days
When bright warm love calls me so loud—in vain?

LAUNCELOT

It cracks my heart to bursting to behold you,
And I am sweating blood; but for my manhood
I cannot take you.

GUENEVERE

What holds you back?

LAUNCELOT

Arthur, dead—stronger than Arthur, living.

GUENEVERE

Then will you leave me here in living death
While you shall reign upon a lordly throne?

LAUNCELOT

That may not be. Arthur, you gave the crown; to you then
I restore it.

GUENEVERE

My knight, my knight! Will you stab loving so?

LAUNCELOT

Lo, how the hand of God works evenly!
We two were our own world, and our own souls
Were to become our heaven; and see, now,
They are our hell; and we can not escape.

GUENEVERE

Sweet Mary, send me death!

LAUNCELOT

It is too much to ask, even for death;
We have not earned the sweet deliverance.

Launcelot places the crown upon the body of Arthur, and puts on a hermit's robe. The knights offer the crown to Galahad, who places it upon the altar.

GALAHAD

I'll be the king
And built such court as men have never seen
Of artisans and blacksmiths, serfs and poets.
Even as Christ to found his commonwealth
Chose fishermen and scorned the Pharisees.

ARCHBISHOP

O Galahad, this have I always taught!

GALAHAD

Taught—yes; with ceaseless streams of empty words.
What one thing have you done to bring them true?
Old church, you have enthroned hypocrisy.
Tied hand and foot to this old game of kings,
What have you done but sanctified their folly,

Called men to slaughter, and wept above them slain?
Take off the miter; lay the crozier down.

Galahad appoints Pinel, the court jester, as chancellor, and bids him

Rule Britain for me; for I shall go forth
And through the crowded huts and lonely cabins
Where young men sit and wonder at the stars
There shall you hear the voice of Galahad
For a new war to put an end to kings!
(The Sangreal appears on the high altar)
O Blood that burst from the rent heart of Christ
Thrill still in all our veins. There is no change
Of color or of warmth or of rich texture
That marks off king from peasant, or one nation
From every kindred nation, yea, behold,
The Blood of God burns in the veins of man,
And all the nations are one brotherhood!

Since this play was written, kings and empires have been hurled into the bottomless abyss. But sometimes it seems that Galahad, who started all this, has lost control.

I went from the seminary with the idea that the proper function of a young priest was to go forth as a kind of Galahad, righting wrongs and challenging evil wherever it might rear its strongholds against the sky.

It did not take long to discover that this is not the prime requisite of a fledgling in the ministry of the Episcopal Church. What is required is some one to run the Sunday School and young people's society while visiting uninfluential families.

Championship of labor and the unemployed by the church was a new thing, in those days, and most improper. For a time it seemed the best way to fulfil these ideals was to join a monastic order, and work free of responsibilities of parish and family. Several times I spent a week or so at the monastery of the Order of the Holy Cross, at West Park. That had been

founded by the Rev. J. O. S. Huntington, largely to carry on the Anti-Poverty Crusade started by Henry George, which lost its zeal under the colorless title of the Single-Tax. Yet another young priest, Lyford Edwards, who had the same idea, showed the difficulties in that way. Edwards became a novice in that order. But when he found he would have to promise to preach nothing except what the Order approved, and found also that the Order rigorously prohibited anything "political" he quit in disgust, and became a professor of Sociology at Columbia University.

Offered the Sunday night service at St. Mark's in the Bouwerie, I conducted forums there under the name of the Socialist Pulpit. My first celebration of the Holy Communion in St. Mark's, on the Sunday night after ordination to the priesthood, was offered in commemoration of all the great ones, Christian or un-Christian, who had helped mankind know the truths that make men free. In that list were Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Euclid, Galileo, Luther, John Wesley, St. John Chrysostom, Arnold of Brescia, John Ball of Kent, Charles Kingsley—a company surely seldom brought together in the sacrifice of the altar.

That summer my brother Royal, rector of the church at Red Lodge, Mont., invited me to make a horseback tour through Yellowstone Park, where autos at that time were forbidden. Each rode one horse, led another. In a grove beside a rushing mountain stream within the Park we found an immense pair of elk antlers, still attached to the skull, which the cavalry officer commanding Soda Butte station allowed us to take out of the Park. That was thirty-six years ago. As I write, they are hanging on my study wall behind me.

The trip was memorable in other ways. On the way out I stopped in Chicago and renewed acquaintance with the little dancing artist, met through the Song of the Alamo. During that stay, also, I was invited to become the associate editor

of The Christian Socialist. Those two events changed the course of my life, and gave yours their start.

On the long way back, while the train rushed over the interminable dusty plains of North Dakota, I was filled with the importance of the coming General Convention of the Episcopal Church, to be held in New York that fall. It is a memorable triennial event, bringing clergy, bishops and lay missionaries from the corners of the earth.

Two multimillionaires, J. Pierpont Morgan and R. Fulton Cutting, had built a stone Synod House on the grounds of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where I had been ordained. Their avowed purpose was to provide a place to house the General Convention; but their real motive, it appeared, was to assert their domination over the church that convention represented. Morgan sent a special train around much of the country, rounding up bishops for all the world like a cowpuncher rounding up cattle for the branding iron. The nation snickered at this humiliating spectacle, which was only a part of the general picture conveyed by the Episcopal church of that day, as a rich man's pet, a society club. So while the train sped east I wrote the ballad Exsurgat Deus, which had a hand in making church history.

The title is the Latin name of the 68th Psalm "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered." These were the words, according to the Book of Numbers, with which Moses summoned the Lord God to go forth with his people on the march through the desert.

I scribbled this ballad on the backs of envelopes as the train jerked and jolted through the dust.

The first person to whom I read it was the little dancing artist in her studio on Ontario street, in grimy Chicago. She knew far more than I about the industrial struggle. Her father had been a stone-cutter, her sister an official of the

Chicago Federation of Labor, another brother an officer of the electricians union.

As other girls would have invited friends to parties, dances and evenings at the theater, she had invited me to mass meetings on behalf of strikers and refugees from Czarist Russia. Where most other folk seemed to think the combination of ministry and the revolution a terrible misfit, to her it seemed the most natural thing in the world. Of course—why not? Christ was a carpenter, his apostles fishermen. He loved the common people, who heard him gladly:—any friend of his must be in the fight for labor. This she took for granted.

She was at that time illustrator for a daily Socialist paper. All these things that had struck me with such novel violence a few years before had been her regular environment. She took them much more as a matter of course. Being Irish, she had learned that revolutions take a long time, and that horrors always occur in wars—especially industrial wars.

Her approval of Exsurgat Deus was shared, it appeared, by the church in general, much to its own amazement. The Living Church printed it in heavy black Old English type, spread over two pages.

Every day during that usually stodgy Convention a soap-box mass meeting of the Church Socialist league was held on the lawn in front of J. P. Morgan's synod hall. During those sessions the Church's department of social service was estab-

lished. For these things this poem got a very fair share of credit. Here it is:

EXSURGAT DEUS!

Arise, O God, in splendor!
That all the world may see
Like dust before the storm-wind
Thy foes far-scattered flee.
Lift Thy right hand, Almighty,
And whet Thy glittering sword,
That heaven and earth again may shake
To Thy tremendous word.

For to the Tent of Meeting
The loud war-trumpets call,
And all the tribes their elders
Send to the Council Hall.
God stands among the princes
And calls them, each by name,
To voice His saints with thunder,
And clothe His priests with flame.

"Gather My saints together
That sacrifice for troth.
The Lord God hath a quarrel
With them that sware His oath.
For if ye be partakers
With usurer and thief,
How can ye teach My Covenant,
Or stablish My belief?

"If prophets preach by favor
And make God out a liar;
If shepherds bend to alien greed
And hold their trust for hire,
If priests profane My altar
With gifts that reek of wrong,
How shall they spread My Gospel
Or lift My vengeance song?

"No way but by a miracle
May Dives win My door.
Woe, woe upon your riches!

My nation is the poor!
Their souls beneath My altar
'How long, O Lord?' do cry.
By fire and sword My Kingdom comes
—Proclaim this, lest ye die.

"The hireling and the stranger
My foes oppress in toil;
The child they crush to labor,
The widow they despoil—
Take ye their cause for conflict
Beneath My conquering sign;
Preach ye the word I gave you,
Else are ye none of Mine!

"The world in turmoil hearkens
To catch My trumpet's thrill;
If ye who bear it, sound it not
Must I send them who will?
Below, the rocks are riven,
Above, the vault is rent.
I rise, I rise to judgment;
My kingdom comes!—Repent!"

I do not think J. Pierpont Morgan and R. Fulton Cutting liked it. As soon as it could be arranged, I resigned from St. Mark's in the Bouwerie and came to Chicago to be managing editor of the Christian Socialist.

I reached here Feb. 14, 1914—Valentine's Day. On July 4, your mother and I were married.

We went for a honeymoon trip to the Rocky Mountains, and camped beside Rosebud Lake, far up in the Beartooth Range. Royal, his wife, Juliet, and our mother, were in that party.

While we were up in that snowy Paradise, on August 4, 1914, World War I broke out. We came back to find the world in flames.

The publisher of the Christian Socialist was an elderly minister who swallowed whole Woodrow Wilson's "mak-

ing the world safe for Democracy." He reacted furiously against my insistence that the war basically was a struggle between Germany's Berlin-to-Bagdad railroad and England's Suez Canal, with no more of idealism in it than a battle of cash registers.

The "irreligious" Socialist Party took an uncompromising stand against War; the Christian Socialist, under this preacher's leadership, swung feverishly behind the war party.

Before this country entered the war I went on numerous lecture trips urging an intelligent peace. On one of these trips in a small town in Kansas, I wrote:

THE HIGH PRIESTS OF MOLOCH
(Appeal to Reason, Sept. 16, 1916)

The bloody drums of Moloch lift up their thundering strain;
The bloody hymn of Moloch snarls on the winds again;
The bloody priests of Moloch go forth to choose the slain!

With flaunted flag and rolling drum
And lying "patriot" cry
They lure the frightened babes to come
Where slaughtered victims lie.
For twice two million victims slain
And wounded three times more
Lie heaped in Moloch's butcher-fane
Across his blood-soaked floor.

We know them, through their altered guise,
These Moloch-priests of old;
The harlot judge who rules by lies,
The thieves that guard our gold;
Rulers whose trade their treason is,
Writers for hire like bawds,
The priests who live by blasphemies,
The prophets fed on frauds.

They drag us for the sacrifice
Where the gilded idol stands,
And what we buy at such a price
Is "Trade in foreign lands!"

For this the toll of blood and flame,
For this the tortured woe,
For this the weight of death and flame
They bid us undergo!

Now from the God of Truth and Light,
From Christ, the Son of Man,
Sounds forth a summons to the fight—
Refuse it, you who can!
"Destroy this idol where it stands
Its hirelings where they frown;
That brotherhood shall bless the lands
And peace the world shall crown!"

The rolling drums of Moloch their thunder lift amain,
But hark! a deeper, clearer tone drowns out their harsh refrain.

The world is sick of war and death, and men are through with strife,
The gathering hosts of brotherhood have pledged themselves to life!

Choose you this day whom you shall serve; choice can you not refuse,
For he that is not on God's side, the murderers cause must choose.

A servant of destruction, sworn slave of death and hell
Is he who halts or hesitates our company to swell.

O gathering host of comrades, your brave hearts lift yet higher;
God's light breaks through the poisoned smoke of demon-kindled fire.

We wage the war that ends all war; the words by us are spoken
Shall crown the world with glorious light—the Day of Peace unbroken!

Woodrow Wilson took up this phrase "War to end war" in his messages to Congress. Maybe he got it from me; I know I wrote it before the President's speech.

By the dislocation of the great war millions of Americans were thrown out of work. Bread lines formed in every city. Unemployed men sold many thousands of copies of the Christian Socialist on street corners in Chicago during that winter of 1914-1915.

We became intensely interested in the problems of the unemployed and migratory worker. With the money of James Eads How, the Millionaire Hobo, we organized the Hobo College. Among poems of that time is one that seriously shocked the good people of the fashionable churches where occasionally I assisted:

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKER

(To the Preacher of the Gospel)
YOU never hunted hungry for a feed,
YOU never felt the Gray Wolf growl and bite;
How can YOU preach a starving Savior's creed,
Or shelter famished souls from storm and night?

But I'm a homeless hobo,
Unvalued and unpriced.
I roam the land from town to town
The same as Jesus Christ.
"The foxes have their holes" said He,
"The birds of the air a nest;
But the Son of Man hath not a place
To lay Him down and rest."

YOU never dined from some smoke-blackened can
On hidden coals beside a weary road,
How can YOU know the homeless Son of Man,
Whose tired feet bled, whose pillow was the sod?

But by the hope above us,
And by the hell below;
By Christ our First Great Comrade,
Whom we—not you—well know,

The Son of Man shall judge you,
And this shall be the test;
"Took ye, as Christ, the hobo,
And gave him of your best?"

Saw you that bread-line shiver in the sleet?
Cold winds, through tattered rags, bit legs half-bare.
Huddled amid their ceaseless-shuffling feet
Jesus of Nazareth stood and trembled there.

"Yea! as ye treat these homeless
Ye have treated God most high.
And where one stands in shame and want
Look well! for there stand I.
The foxes have their holes" said He,
"The birds of the air a nest;
But the Son of Man hath not a place
To lay His head and rest."

The least of these His brethren; that was He!
God crucified looked through a lost boy's eye.
The fur-clad pastor glanced disdainfully;
"Incompetents" said he, and hastened by.

Your Progress and Inventions
They steal our daily bread;
Your profits grow by ten times ten
But we lie down unfed.
You herd us into kennels,
You club us into jails,
And your machine-guns mow us down
When your lordly patience fails.

Yet our Great Comrade's spirit
Shall tear off every crown;
Shall seize this world, and shake it loose,
And turn it upside down.
Then share with us that spirit
That dies to set men free;
That makes the whole wide world a home
For men like Christ—and me!

As Christmas came, the plight of the millions driven into desperation in the dismemberment of everything by the first world war, bore hard upon us. Out of that feeling came these published in the Christian Socialist:

CHRISTMASTIDE

Through wintry ways at Bethlehem
  The weary strangers go,
A bearded man, a shrinking girl,
  With bleeding feet, and slow.
But every door is locked amain
  For full is every home.
The tribesmen crowd from far and near
  To yield the tax of Rome.

Warm splendor decks the perfumed hall
  Where drunken Caesars sleep;
But through cold streets, with wolfish eye
  The plundered People creep.
Through every inn the reeking mobs
  In packed discomfort lie;
And Mary, in a freezing cave,
  Stills Jesus' newborn cry.

Now all the world, with pealing bells
  Hails that remembered night
With chant and prayer and incense sweet,
  Music, and hallowed rite;
While starving, freezing, terror-torn
  Beneath an iron sky
In hovel, slum and huddled hall
  His stricken people lie.

For crafty Caesar vows to Christ
  The shrines his plunder built,
And while God's prophets share his spoils
  They glorify his guilt.
Outside their thousand steepled fanes
  The Holy Family cowers,
And icy death draws grimly close
  As clang the brazen hours.

In barren attics, winter-swept,
The hungry Christ-child cries,
While Mary-Mother's hopeless tears
Blind toil-inflamed eyes.
By club and lead and harlot law,
By cruelty and shame,
The world still hounds the Christ to death,
Yet flaunts the Christian name.

Homeless He faints in every street
And Christian doors are barred
By them He branded hypocrites
To Him they hail as Lord.
O mockery of Christmastide,
O blasphemy of lies!
The Babe you praise with costly choir
Among you starving dies!

EVICTED

"Why can't I have a Christmas tree?"
The little fellow cried.
With wistful eyes he snuggled close
Up to his mother's side.
She drew her tattered shawl more tight,
But never a word replied.

Shop windows blazed with twinkling lights,
Heaped high with Christmas joys,
Rich treasure for the gladdened eyes
Of happy girls and boys.
But if a waif no home possess,
What need has he for toys?

Chill winter winds with blustering sport
His ragged clothes bite through.
His face, with hunger pinched and wan,
With cold is drawn and blue.
His mother grips his shivering hands,
And chokes a sob or two.

"I wish we had a Christmas tree"
He murmured, very low.
"The Christ Child sure would send us one,
If He could only know.
His cradle was a manger, once,
But there, there was no snow."

"If I kneel down," he said again,
"Here on the street, and pray,
I wonder if He'd send us one,
One tree, on His birthday?
You told me once the Tree of Life
Blooms in His home, alway."

Down in a corner, dark and cold,
He drops on weak, numb knees.
She spreads her shawl to hide him there.
No eye of mortal sees.
"Dear Jesus, send a tree" he prays
—"If you can spare one, please."

She cannot see the sleety way
For blinding, burning tears,
And choking sobs that shake her form
Deafen her muffled ears . . .
The Christmas hymns, at midnight chime,
Swell glad;—but neither hears.

HONEYMOON SONGS

During that first period of the World War, when the tension grew ever more tight, I moved in a kind of three ring circus, the Christian Socialist, the Art Institute and the Church of the Redeemer. The rector, Dr. John Henry Hopkins, was a kindly man of the New England aristocracy, with no conception whatever of what lay behind the terrible struggle then developing. At the Art Institute we discussed new theories of art and the sculpture of Donatello; in the Christian Socialist and in the labor circles generally, we spoke of the desperate need of the unemployed.

In all these activities my bride stood steadfastly by my side. In the church sacristy, early one Sunday morning, while pondering these things, I wrote:

PAL O' MINE

Down the ways we'll go together
  Pal o' mine,
Sunny days and evil weather,
  Storm, or shine
Tiny hand upon my arm,
  Brave eyes smiling,
Heart steel-true and lips love-warm,
Scattering trouble with their charm
  Grief beguiling,
    —Pal-o'-Mine!

Deep you've drunk the cup of living ,
  Heart-o'-mine,
Little joy, much sorrow giving,
  Gall, for wine.
Yet no bitterness you know,
  But, love distilling,
In your eyes, burnt wide with woe
Wondrous cordials richly glow
  My soul a-thrilling
    —Heart-o'-mine!

Nearer now than sun or sorrow,
  Wife-o'-mine;
Dearer now than past or morrow,
  Hope, or sign;
Closer, truer, more—O best
  Beyond all telling;
Stormy petrel, seeking rest,
Harbor here upon my breast,
  There indwelling
    —Life-o'-mine!

A series of songs followed this, expressing the profound satisfaction and pride of soul arising from the deep and all

pervading happiness of that little home. I wrote them at odd moments and took them home to the girl—

"whose love had been my light,
Preshadowed through my forward-envious days"

as one of those childhood sonnets prophesied truly.

We started housekeeping in a one-room studio on strident North ave. Odds and ends made up our furniture. Fellow tenants were the painters, sculptors and illustrators who filled the building. We had parties and festivals on the shoestring basis common to artists and illustrators—not because they liked it, but because they could afford no more.

Once in a while we invited clergy and their wives from fashionable churches and schools. One such faculty wife—her husband was professor in a theological seminary—came to our little studio party in a low-cut evening gown, and could converse only about the latest editorial in the Living Church. A girl artist whispered frantically to another guest:

"What in hell is the Living Church?" the answer being

"How the hell should I know?"

Out of the ecstasy of that first honeymoon year came these songs:

SONG FOR A RAINY DAY

Tis a dull drear day
  And the mist hangs low;
'Tis sodden underfoot, and dark above;
  But O your voice's music
And your dark eyes' warming glow,
  As you sing me Erin's melodies of love!

There is balm for wintry weather,
  There is light for lowering gloom,
There is hope and blessed healing
  For a heart distressed and weak,
When we sit alone together
  In our cozy curtained room,
With your head upon my shoulder
  And your lips against my cheek!

SONG

God crowned the world with Womanhood
That He might see
How strong a thing, and pure, and good
Himself might be.

God crowned the race with Motherhood
That He might show
What heights and depths, He understood,
In souls might grow.

God crowned your kind, Dear Heart, with You
To give to me
All that is high and deep and strong and true,
My own to be!

SEA CAVES

As in some green sea-cave rich music rings
With rise and fall of gem-incrusted tides,
Where every wave a surging ballad sings
And every wandering wind a secret hides;—

So in the love-bound cavern of my heart
The strong tides rise and fall with thoughts of you;
My dreams leave sweet sea-music as they part,
And lingering, whispering hopes their strains renew;

How could I know such ceaseless music dwelt
Within me as awakens to your eyes?
How could I know, who dreamed, but had not felt
The Great Deep shake beneath, how deep it lies?

DEEPS

Deep calleth unto deep;—leaping on high
The gray sea thunders toward the upper bound,
And vaulting heaven answers that strong cry
With solemn silence, deeper than all sound.

There is a call that thunders in my soul,
Deeper than ocean, sheerer than the sky.
Waking or still, its echoes through me roll
Beneath all passing sounds that melt and die.

It is my heart that calls, nor will be dumb;
  It is your love that answers, hour by hour;
It is my life that thrills, now you have come,
  More than my heart as Spring is than the flower.

SKIES

Shallow the skies of noon above us bend
  Placid and low,
With lazy drifting clouds, that pile and rend
  As the winds blow.

But through the midnight gloom what glories burst!
  Steep beyond steep,
Splendid in awe, in shadowy light immersed,
  Fathomless deep;

So when I look, Dear Heart, in your deep eyes
  Eternity
Looks back, as that rich love which in them lies
  Lays hold on me.

LOVE SONG

A fragrant isle in a tropic sea,
  A white beach fringed with palm
Where sunsets mirror their mystery
  In a dark lagoon's wide calm;—
Or a castled keep at break of day
  In the breast of the turquoise hills,
Where leaping fountains glitter at play
  In a garden of daffodils;

Oh I've dreamed away, and I've dreamed afar
  Of a place where all cares cease,
Where naught but death or a falling star
  Could shatter our tranquil peace.
But I'd rather have you, in a gypsy wain,
  Or a shanty you made sweet,
Than to rule in the tents of Tamburlane,
  With a tiger-rug at my feet!

HEAVEN

In the wildest waste of Heaven
  There's a cabin meant for me,
On the point of a rocky headland
  Looking out to a westward sea;
O I crave no crystal city
  With streets of beaten gold
Nor blaze of light unending
  Nor harpers manifold;

But I want a snug log cabin
  By a cold, clear mountain spring;
And I'd rather hear the meadow-larks
  Than a choir of angels sing.
There the deer will run us races
  And the fish teach us to swim,
And the brown bears romp and wrestle
  On the canyon's dizzy rim;

There the Big Chief rides a-singing
  On cool winds that surge and fly,
And he'll pause beside our campfire
  With welcome in his eye.
By our fragrant burning cedar
  When the blessed night hangs low,
He will tell us all the meaning
  Of the things that hurt us so.

I'd be lost in pearly cities,
  And I'd slip on crystal floors;
And I don't like classic music
  And I'm shy of jewelled doors;
But I want to come at twilight
  With a weary, glad halloo,
To the blaze of a leaping campfire,
  And our bungalow—and you.

FORECAST

When my old eyes are weary,
  And my tired heart is chill,
In winters long and dreary,
  On midnights lone and still.

—Ah, then the lingering splendor
Of these rich days of June,
Of dawn dew-sweet and tender,
Of fragrant, listening noon,

Will echo all the story
Your warm love round me throws;
Will cleanse the night with glory,
And heal the hurt of snows.

As war tension grew, the editor of the Christian Socialist became more bitter against both me and the Socialist Party. While I was on a lecture tour, he fired me by wire.

Almost immediately I obtained a position with the national office of the Socialist Patry, as literature director. In that position I wrote pamphlets, in particular one called "The Price We Pay" which had a circulation of about five million. On account of it many were sent to prison.

All over the country opponents of the war were mobbed, tarred and feathered, hounded and driven from their homes. Yellow paint was splashed over their houses, and the prisons were filled with them.

Treatment given conscientious objectors was savage. At Leavenworth Prison was a wire stockade, in which were professors, ministers, students—idealists of many kinds. A number were Mennonites. Some of these were beaten by the guards, so that they died.

KANSAS

(In honor of conscientious objectors to war, killed in prison.)

The little towns of Kansas are clean and fresh and neat.
The little towns of Kansas are broad, and straight of street.
They lie along the railroads like beads along a string,
Between her fields that flourish all splendid in the spring.

The men I know in Kansas are straight, and wide of brow.
Their hands are strong on hammer, and drill and axe and plow.
The girls in sheltered houses, the wives on busy farms
Are clear of eye and laughter like sunshine after storms.

For memories deep and holy breathe up from every sod.
The tempest that begot her still sounds within her blood.
The blood of stout forefathers who like a stormwind came
To save her soil for freedom and crown her heart with flame.

Yet there's one town in Kansas that future years shall greet,
One gate where all the centuries shall pause with reverent feet.
For there are walls in Kansas, strong-barred and grim and high;
And there are cells in Leavenworth that saw God's heroes die.

* * *

Five of the national officials of the Socialist Party, including myself, were indicted by a federal grand jury on the ground of conspiring to obstruct the draft. We were sentenced to twenty years in prison by Judge Landis.

On the night before our trial began I visited the Art Institute. At the top of the marble staircase our remote ancestor Teucer stood with drawn bow, and next him young Sophocles, leading the cheering at the battle of Salamis to the accompaniment of his lyre.

Where so many others had been sent to prison, I fully expected to be sent also. The poets in Wire City had smuggled out from time to time copies of an improvised magazine they wrote, largely consisting of poetry.

At St. Mark's in the Bouwerie the rector, Dr. William Norman Guthrie, had spoken much about Greek and Latin poetry; how it was chanted, not spoken, and how its varied rhythms reflected the most subtle of emotions.

So in one of those ancient Greek meters, I wrote:

SOPHOCLES

Here in bronze young Sophocles stands exultant
Lyre aloft, wild victory-paeans chanting
—Persian hosts at Salamis all confounded,
Hellas triumphant!

All around loom statues of gods and heroes,
Poor, bewildered torsos of myths forgotten,
Broken, strange, in desolate preservation
Locked in a prison!

Gone, the fragrant incense alight at dawning,
Gone, the wide-limbed murmuring oaks above them,
Gone, the joy and melody all pervading
Sweet in the sunlight.

Well for thee, O Sophocles, thou art blinded;
Dead eyes see not mockeries past believing;
Bronze hearts burst not at all the blasphemous follies
Here that surround thee.

Long hath faded the victory of thy singing;
With such stones as builded this gray museum
Lo, for Beauty's worshipers now in outlaw
Build we a prison.

Chained they hang in Leavenworth's darkest dungeons,
Nine long hours by wrists all swollen and bleeding;
They who dared sing brotherhood all triumphant,
They who love Beauty;

They who dared with prophecies of the morrow
Front this night of terrified old oppression;
They who dared face tyranny's hand uplifted—
Yet they are singing!

Out of the darkness, the deep and desolate dungeons,
Through steel bars, through walls of granite and marble,
Strong and clear the singing of new rebellion
Echoes, foretelling

Swift approaching victory of the spirit;
Man's old fears and mockeries all evanished.
Hark! With heads erect and spirits exultant
Dare we to join them!

One of those who hung "nine long hours with wrists all swollen and bleeding" was Evan Thomas, a Presbyterian minis-

ter, brother of Norman Thomas, so often candidate for President on the Socialist ticket.

Expecting to spend those twenty years in a prison cell, I attempted to rush into print lectures and poems I had been delivering and writing all these years.

Those published were: Internationalism, The Martyr Peoples, A History of Imperialism, the Geography of the Gods, besides Poems of a Socialist Priest, The Sangreal, and the printed version of The Chosen Nation, which I tried to hand to Judge Landis as he pronounced sentence.

Thousands of these paper-backed volumes were sold on the strength of a full page advertisement in radical and liberal magazines, headed "A Personal Letter from a Convict." During the time the appeal was pending I lectured across the country in company with Lincoln Steffens. When word came that the Supreme Court had reversed Judge Landis' sentence, we were in Great Falls, Mont., where the news was spread across page one of the local newspaper.

So I came back home a free man.

Then began the disheartening and long unsuccessful search for a means of supporting our small but growing family. You boys were too young to know how long and bitter that struggle was. But at no time did your mother's smile grow dim, or the light in her eyes flicker with less than perfect trust and steadfast loyalty.

Many a night a soap-box oration held a crowd long enough to give the orator—me—enough of a collection to take home some money for the family groceries.

In 1920 I attended the Socialist Party national convention in New York, which nominated Eugene V. Debs as president while he was in Atlanta penitentiary, convicted of obstructing the draft. For one session of that hectic gathering I presided.

Twenty-four years later I officiated as chaplain of the

national Republican Party, offering the prayer at the Chicago convention that nominated Thomas G. Dewey.

Tempora mutant, et nos mutantur in illis!

But that was far in the future. In the 1920's the problem was food and shelter.

On the strength of fanciful designs for children's furniture in the form of storks, bears and cats, we organized a manufacturing company to produce these. Most of the money came from companions of the Socialist days. Trying to manage that company taught me the bitter lesson labor has not understood; that management is a necessity. Labor ill-organized and ill-directed is wasted. Lacking business training I could not manage the company. It went bankrupt.

Our of that experience came this sonnet; perhaps the best I have ever written:

MEMORIES

Weary was Jesus for the smell of wood;
  Fresh, fragrant shavings, curling from His plane—
  How often would He long for them in vain
When ringed by vengeful Pharisees He stood,
And saw hot myriads huddling at His feet,
  Deaf to His teaching, clamorous but for bread,
  Mocking, blaspheming when He raised the dead—
Then more than ever His old shop seemed sweet;
With golden sawdust littered on the floor,
  Bright morning sunlight glinting on clean steel,
  His hammer's weight, His favorite chisel's feel,
With Mary's song borne softly through the door,
And Joseph close beside Him, quick to guide—
How oft He thought of them, and smiled—and sighed!

During all the time of the desperate and futile struggle of the Children's Chair Company I was acting as chaplain at a home for orphan children run by the Sisters of St. Mary, an Episcopal order of nuns.

After floundering around all through the week amid unaccustomed seas of notes and renewals, invoices and payrolls,

it gave me a grip on something permanent, to stand before the accustomed altar and lead in the familiar words of the liturgy.

The children cheerfully sang hymns I wrote for them. It was a thrill indescribable to hear their sweet, pure voices lifted in the words I had written to my own melodies.

One of the sisters told me of a visiting preacher who had referred at Christmas time to "Our Little Lord." So I wrote this hymn, which has been widely published—first in the Daily News—but which the children at St. Mary's sang first.

LITTLE LORD

Spotless is Thine altar laid
  Little Lord, Little Lord;
White as lay Thy manger bed
  There by Mary Mother.
All we have is scant and bare
But full and rich, if Thou wilt share;
  Bethlehem Thy birthen-place
    Surely had no other.

Round the world Thine anthems rise
  Little Lord, Little Lord;
Angels sang when empty skies
  Saw Thee quit Thy splendor.
Weak and few our voices here
But Thou wilt hearken with good cheer;
  Bethlehem Thy birthen-place
    Naught but love could render.

Desert waste and waters strong,
  Little Lord, Little Lord
Lie before Thee league-and-long,
  Woeful ways tomorrow.
Woe nor waste can daunten Thee,
Thy love o'erleaps all barriers free;
  Bethlehem Thy birthen-place
    Maketh joy of sorrow.

Once or twice I took you boys to an evening service there. The children were enchanted with you, especially Barney, who spoke right out in the middle of my sermon:

"What story is Daddy telling these little girls?"

On festivals we used incense at evensong. This was just at the close of World War I. One could not help thinking, as fragrant smoked swirled around the glittering candles, and childish voices rose in song, of those innumerable homes in Europe destroyed, and those hundred thousand homes in this country made desolate by the sacrifice of life and limb of our own men. So for these children I wrote also this hymn, which they sang with feeling, since many of them had lost fathers or close relatives in the war.

INCENSE HYMN

By this fragrant smoke ascending,
Lord, our love to Thee we show,
Ever upward, upward tending,
Linking heaven to earth below.
Where our altar-candles burning
With Thy stars own welcome shine,
May Thy children's hearts, returning,
Dwell in fellowship with Thine.

In the smoke of Moloch's altar
All the nations mourn their slain;
And our voices faint and falter
Mid the outcry of their pain.
By Thy blessed dew of healing
Quench the flames of hate and hell;
By Thy light, Thy love revealing,
All the fumes of war dispel.

To the Father of our Spirits
Now our songs as incense rise;
To the Son whose love inherits
All our hopes of Paradise;
To the Holy Spirit brooding
O'er the night to make it day,
May Thy love, all loves including
Win the world to peace, we pray!

They loved to act out this song:

LULLABY

Now the big blue Sky was lonely,
When the Sun sank in the sea;
And she said "Won't some kind playmate
Come and spend the night with me?"

Then the Evening Breeze went calling
In the tree-tops green and high,
Seeking for some nice companion
Who would entertain the Sky.

All the trees were very sorry,
That they could not fly so far.
But they said; "In yonder western clouds
There dwells the Evening Star."

So among the clouds of sunset
Went the breezes, singing low,
Till they found that great Star hiding
In the mellow golden glow.

Then they brought her forth with gladness
And she shook her hair so bright,
Saying; "Call my little children
Who will glitter all the night.'

And the little Stars came running,
And they shone out one by one,
And they twinkled in the Sky's big heart
Till the long, long Night was gone.

After close of World War I, hosts of young people hailed with joy the idea of a war-free world, of international unity, of peace based on fraternal faith. To some of them, the idea expressed in The Sangreal appealed strongly. We formed a group called The Cathedral Players, and for eight months rehearsed the play, hoping to find a means of presenting it as our contribution toward peace.

Eventually we obtained consent of the rector of a prominent suburban church to give it in his parish hall. It was played to packed houses. Professionals gave it high praise. Many of the actors were dramatic students, some were veterans who were sick of war and its horrors.

But when the time came for reckoning up, the rector put in bills at what seemed to us extortionate rates for the services of his janitor, his choir, his organist; for the rental of the parish hall not only for the presentation but for all the rehearsals; for the electric lights we had used and for every other incidental he could think up.

The net balance in our favor, after eight months of labor, was one cent. He took the rest.

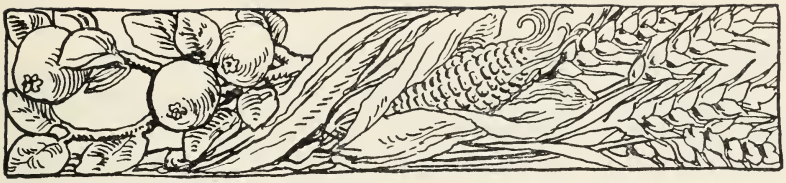
The chaplain of a neighboring Roman Catholic hospital had seen the play, liked it, and asked us to produce it for his institution. We would share the profits, he said. But the rector told us we could not take out of his parish house the costumes, the scenery and the properties we had designed and made, unless we paid him $300 cash in advance. He added:

"And if you can't do that, I'll sell them for junk!"

The Cathedral Players looked at him amazed. Then looked at me in cynical disgust. One of them said as we left his study:

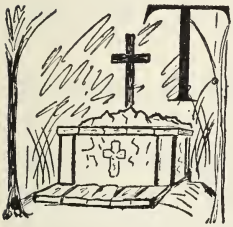
"So that's what the Holy Grail means to the Church?"

The Cathedral Players broke up, nor did any of us have the heart to try and gather again.



CHAPTER 4

AT THE END OF THE ROAD



THOSE words "I'll sell them for Junk" drove me home, literally sick. I went to bed and stayed two days, caring for nothing. My wife, amazed, said:

"Aren't you going to fight? I've never seen you give up so easily."

Fight for what? The Holy Grail sold for junk—should I fight to cast more such pearls? In that "junk" were gorgeous robes of Queen Guenevere, golden armor of Sir Launcelot.

More than that was in that "junk". Hope for a new world of peace, summons to join again the ancient Quest, new purposes and high ideals of young folk rebelling against the misery and horror, so soon to be repeated.

"I'll sell them for junk!"

Later I understood a little better. The rector of a fashionable church with a very large debt is a slave to money. Not for him are the words of Christ: "Provide neither silver nor gold nor copper in your purses—"

That might have been all right for the "simple-minded Jesus"—but not for the up-to-date rector of a modern and very fashionable suburban church. He must have the cash, even if he had to sell the Holy Grail for junk.

Poor soul, he died desperately battling against compounding debt that devoured him like a cancer.

For years after that I did not go near an Episcopal church.

What brought me back you will see later on in the story.

Still it was necessary to support our growing family. In one of the darkest moments, a job materialized on the Herald-Examiner at the old occupation of copy-reading. Regular pay checks came in, week by week.

There are no false fronts in the newspaper business. It is frankly a business, aiming to sell news, comment and amusement—to the largest possible number of purchasers. It is a capitalistic enterprise, and says so quite openly; but it left hours after work free to do what I pleased.

All of you boys have grown up around the copy-desk nourished on printers' ink.

In the more than quarter-century I have worked at this particular copy-desk, literally thousands of men have come and gone around it. There have been twelve managing editors, scores of city editors, assistant city editors and telegraph editors. The host of reporters and copy-readers who have passed through those long news-rooms is in retrospect like a column of shadows.

In copy-reading there is an art something like that of a sculptor. To take a shapeless mass of words, hew and trim it into a true gem and thing of beauty; top the story with a headline which out of mangled and distorted facts becomes a clear monument of that event—this is no inconsiderable feat. Particularly since most of civilized mankind builds its vision of the world on the headlines it reads the art has become of supreme importance.

A copy-reader must know many facts in many fields. Spelling of words and of names must be clear in his mind. Proper definitions, exact meanings are his stock in trade. He must weave them into fixed patterns of lines and spaces, so that his headline while not implying too much, will be packed full of all the story holds or implies.

An editor must plan for tomorrow. Frequently he must

atone for yesterday while covering events of today. But a copy-reader deals only with the facts set before him. When the day is ended, he is through, free to turn his mind to his own latent affairs and dominant interests.

So these years on the copy-desk, instead of hampering, set me free.

Twenty-five years is a long time to have worked on one newspaper. But it seems long only when I look back over the years and check off former comrades now dead.

No one looking at a newspaper, lying folded and silent beside the front door, could glimpse from its appearance the sweat and turmoil that went to the making of it only a few hours before. Few of the personalities that take a hand in its production ever appear to the public eye. Every one hears about the "trained seals" who write what they are supposed to write. Men who struggle to get the story of the world compressed into metal type are anonymous to the readers, yet very well known to their fellows in range of the smell of ink.

On the old Herald-Examiner our religion editor was the Rev. W. H. Carwardine, a mild, white haired, soft-spoken Methodist minister who never appeared in public or private—except in the pulpit—without a very large and very black cigar stuck in his mouth. Questioned about that deviation from customary Methodism, he would take out the cigar, look at it sadly, sigh and say "Yes, the Lord and I have had many a battle on the subject of tobacco—but I always won—" and replace the cigar.

It was years before I knew he had been in his young days a firebrand among the Methodists, as a champion of labor. It was in his home that Eugene V. Debs had been hidden during the stormy days of the Pullman strike that made Debs famous.

So when old Doc Carwardine died, I wrote:

FROM THOSE HE LOVED

Their joy and grief beholding
  God looks on large and least;
That vision all-enfolding
  Reporter shares with priest.
One chronicles man's sorrow,
  His fear and hope and pain,
That on the heedless morrow
  It may be felt again.

The other, all life's story
  Writes on no flimsy scroll;
His brethren's shame and glory
  Lie graven on his soul.
Garbed with this double mission,
  To know men, and to win,
You saw, with equal vision,
  Without us and within.

Brother of all men living;
  Lifter of them that fell;
Father-in-God, forgiving
  Those whom you loved so well;
Gentle against all railings,
  So childlike, yet so wise—
Be all our faults and failings
  Judged by your kindly eyes!

We all believed our one-time telegraph editor, Milton Dunn, really was slaughtered by the casual cruelty common to executives, prior to the days of the union. On vacation Milt drove to California. There he was offered a job he was very eager to take. But the then managing editor refused a transfer, and ordered Dunn home "forthwith." Sadly Milt drove back through gathering snows, caught pneumonia, and died.

We felt bitter, I wrote this poem, which the editor refused to print, on the ground it was "too personal." But the printers, sharing our editorial-side indignation, set it up and ran off proofs, which were distributed among the staff.

GOOD-BYE, MILT

When the Master of all News Writers has ordered the forms
to close,
And put His "stet" on the stories that only the writer knows;
When we see our lives in His living type, for all who will to read,
With every thought set out in full, with every word and deed;

There'll be changes, perhaps, in the story we'd give our lives to
make,
There'll be errors crude and careless, and many a weird mistake;
For many a time we've missed the point, or let false statements
ride,
Or told as jest a solemn truth, or just barefacedly lied.

But I hope that my life story will read as straight and true
With as little cause for vain regret, and gross mistakes as few
As those you made in the living, either in work or fun,
That ever need cause you sorrow in the reading of them,
Milt Dunn!

For many fellow employees I have performed the services of the church; baptizing them or their children, solemnizing their marriages, burying them. Of one of these callous scribes, when his own wedding day approached, I wrote:

A NEWSPAPER MAN'S WEDDING

In cynic calm with brow serene
He writes the woes of others.
Their fears and tortures merely mean
That, while a yawn he smothers,
He rattles off on dancing keys
This chronicle of their miseries;

SIGNALS CONFUSED:
TWO DEAD IN CRASH:
PET PUPPY HOMELESS

For all the things that may befall
A luckless human creature
To him are just material
To build into a feature.
On yarns of hate, revenge and death
He scrawls with bored, unquickened breath;

GANG GUNS BLAZE AGAIN:
WIDOW LEAPS 48 FLOORS
TO ESCAPE QUESTIONING

But oh, how different does it feel
When HE'S the luckless hero;
He stares, he gulps, he tries to squeal,
His temperature's at zero;
If he upon his wedding day
Wrote what he really felt, he'd say:

BRIDEGROOM REPENTS
AT ALTAR: SCREAMS
"I WON'T!" ESCAPES

* * *

This was the outcome of an all too common tragedy:

A PRINTER'S FAREWELL TO HIS PIPE

Farewell, my trusty comrade;
We've known each other long.
Full many a friend I've had, but none
Whose friendship was so—strong.

You've stood by me in trouble
Through harsh adversity,
And when misfortunes ringed me round
Your heart has burned for me.

But now no more my sorrow
Will vanish in your smoke,
And we must bid a last good-bye
Because, like me, you're broke.

Behind all the empires of history lies the story of Commercial Centralization and enterprise. In tribute to that capitalist point of view is this:

CHICAGO'S SKY-LINE

Sunrise gilds these battlements
  And sunset paints these towers;
And naught had gorgeous Babylon
  More glorious than ours!
With crimson light and golden light
  And emerald light together
They flame across the darkened waves
  And cleave the misty weather.

Who dwell amid these pinnacles
  And call these summits home?
They who moored Venice mid her floods,
  They who ennobled Rome.
For caravans built Nineveh
  And craftsmen ruled in Tyre
From winnowing the wanton winds
  And fettering the fire.

Vibrant, alive, from farm and mine
  To kingdoms vague and gray
Speed forth their keen adventurers
  To win their meed and pay!
Peaks of the shoreless prairie—
  Foam of the inland sea—
White miracles of masonry—
  They link the clouds and me!

Under Calvin Coolidge, "economy" became the national watchword. In all except the personal expenditures of the President, everything was cut to the bone, while the lavish waste of the White House itself became appalling. Housing of the army became a national disgrace. Budget Director Lord gave special commendation to clerks who saved pencil stubs and loose ends of string. Meanwhile the administration sank six

first-class battleships, under the Washington treaty, and the cost of the White House leaped to $600,000 a year.

ECONOMY

On rags and straw, in barracks cold,
  The coughing soldier dies,
While his Commander, shrewd and bold,
  Cries out "Economize!
"Save strings and pins and tainted meat;
  Potato parings save—
While I sink our Atlantic fleet
  Beneath the thrifty wave!"

Four million jobless save on cents,
  The mail clerks save on pay;
The army saves on ragged tents,
  The horses save on hay;—
Cheer up, brave soldier, weak and ill,
  Your sufferings bravely bear;
You foot the White-House party-bill;
  Six hundred grand a year!

Six hundred thousand cash it takes
  To house in proper state
The man who all this saving makes,
  Our wise Chief Magistrate.
Now does he salt it in his lid,
  Or does he fling it wide?
Say, Calvin, tell us now; where DID
  That saved two billion hide?

Under H. L. Stimson, Hoover's Secretary of State, a naturalized American was meekly surrendered to Mussolini, facing almost certain death for a purely political offense, when Mussolini asserted that American naturalization could not protect a native of Italy.

AVE CAESAR!

Furl that forsaken banner,
  Fire one last sunset gun!
Beside Potomac darkens
  The shade of Washington!
For on the banks of Tiber
  Proud Caesar clenched his hand
—And crawl must we, on bended knee
  Until he bids us stand!

Oh you with knees soft-jointed
  From kissing royal hems,
Who cringe and fawn on London
  —Leash-jackals of the Thames!
Must we forever tremble
  At every titled frown?
To every pampered cur that snarls
  Must we in fright fall down?

Ye brawn and blood of Lincoln,
  Bred under eagles' wings—
Enslaved by London clubmen
  And sycophants of kings;
How long shall you, forgotten,
  Betrayed, sit voiceless by
While they you placed in power
  Make liberty a lie?

Through long necessity of economy we learned to purchase most of our furnishings in "resale shops"—namely, high-class second-hand stores. Learning of the tragic history of some of these relics, remnants of broken homes, lent a new luster to faded texture and form. Out of that came:

THE RESALE SHOP

Here in this quiet shelter
  Lie piled around your feet,
Sea-drift, from wreck and welter
  Of many a gallant fleet.
But by what tempests battered
  Or by what shocks sent low,
These ships were rent and shattered,
  The gods who launched them know.

Long since was hushed that thunder;
  Long since, those waves were stilled;
Yet hearts swell big with wonder
  And ears with awe are filled
When strongly on long beaches
  With deep unresting roar
The laboring sea still reaches
  To load the burdened shore.

With gifts too rich to number
  From gulfs too deep to plumb
Those lavish sea-hands cumber
  White sands that lie so dumb.
Yet must we pause and wonder
  With vague and blind surmise,
When from a spent wave's thunder
  We wrest some precious prize.

And as the storm's deep measure
  Lives in each chanting shell,
So may a soul's lost treasure
  Old storms, old passions tell;—
Deep through this caverned quiet
  A far-off murmur rings;
Echoes of fevered riot,
  Music of muted strings.

From well-loved haunts forsaken,
  From withered nests outgrown,
These things that we have taken
  Are not of wood and stone;
But leaden fronts of sorrow,
  And golden stuff of dreams;
Mist fabrics of tomorrow
  And memory's silver gleams.

Long days of sunlit laughter,
  Long nights of hopeless tears;
Bright dawns that followed after
  Some wild midnight of fears;
Those marks so deeply graven
  A close-kept meaning spell,
Of raptures caught from heaven,
  Or torments brought from hell.

The craftsman's eye is clever,
  The artist's hand is true;
But craft and art could never
  With such rich worth endue.
Not by such paltry measure
  The fruits of life are weighed;
For riches that we treasure
  The blood of souls is paid—

Prohibition, enacted in the midst of World War I, resulted in mad gang warfare. Every day headlines flamed with some new atrocity. It was always the minor gangsters who seemed to fall victims in the conflict. The major thieves, those in high office who protected their respective bands of assassins, were never brought out into the open.

After a trio of police officers had been slain in gang conflicts, I wrote and tried in vain to have the Herald-Examiner publish:

KILLED ON DUTY

If we must die in battle
  Against a cornered foe,
By day or night our oaths invite
  The fate that wills it so.
In rat-hole and in sewer
  That choke a clean man's breath,
Hourly we seek black hands that reek
  With filthy forms of death.

But—God!—to see go cleared and free
  While we go curbed and tied
The grinning gang of murderers
  By whom our comrades died—
That wakes a stifled fury;
  That chokes a smouldering breath;
That leaves a smart within the heart
  Tenfold more sharp than death.

Cowards are none among us;
  Weaklings, who shrink from pain
Avoid our trade, where life is played
  At hazard with no gain.
But you, whose lives we shelter,
  One thing, one thing we pray;
By all you hold most holy
  Swear us an oath today;

Strike quickly through the shadow;
  Strike at those powers who lurk
BEHIND the fools who wield the tools,
  The shotgun, and the dirk.
Strike at those whispering felons
  Whose blood is never shed;
Shatter these bands that tie our hands;
  Avenge—avenge our dead!

Another, about the same time, was inspired by the discovery of 35 graves of soldiers who were killed in World War I, but whose burial mounds were unmarked. Over their graves no flag flew.

Veterans came back from World War I to find no provision whatever made for them. Thousands took to apple-polishing—selling apples on street corners. You who came back from World War II to find ample provision made for easing the shock of demobilization can have no conception of how great is the difference—even with all the discontent about housing.

FORGOTTEN
(Jan. 12, 1926)

Forgotten, beneath a cold sky,
  A tattered flag drooping above—
Nation that sent us to die,
Is this place, where you leave us to lie,
  The reward of our love?

Youth, and our hopes, and our years—
  You took from us all that was ours;
But this—this is worse than all fears;
Remembered not even with tears—
  Not even with flowers!

Lucky ones, you who were slain
  Where battle lines smouldered and shook;
Death spared you these ages of pain,
Where no one gives greeting again,
  Nor friendship, nor look.

Nation that leaves us forlorn!
  Peace is ours, in Eternity's hem.
But you!—on your flag shall be scorn
In the eyes of your sons yet unborn!
  Will you cleanse it—for them?

Sermons by "liberal" clergymen, explaining away everything in the Christian faith—even God—and holding themselves up as the goal of all creation, stirred this:

HYMN MODERNE

"To God on high be glory
  On earth, goodwill to men!"
Proclaim the deathless story
  With heart and voice again.
Hail, Star whose guiding splendor
  Led wise men from afar
Their homage glad to render!
  (P.S.—There was no Star.)

Aroused from toil-worn slumber
  Amid their huddled sheep,
By angels past all number
  From Heaven's sounding steep,
The Shepherds to the Manger
  Hastened in loving fear
To greet the Heavenly Stranger;
  (P.S.—No Babe was there.)

By every race and people
  Let hymns of joy be sung;
From every Christian steeple
  Let pealing bells be rung
God's wondrous gift proclaiming
  To every clime and sod;
God's wondrous promise claiming;—
  (P.S.—There is no God.)

But if, by "modern" teaching
  All ancient creeds are sunk,
And cynic hands, far-reaching,
  Besmear old faith as "bunk,"
Why keep alive obsession?
  Why cater to the mob?
Why not quit this profession?
  (P.S.—They need their job!)

In weekly article on Chicago Statues in the Examiner, I asserted once, apropos of a Lincoln Park memorial to Indians, that the red race had vanished from our shores. Next day I got a letter tartly inviting me to attend the Grand Council Fire of American Indians. There I found delegates from many tribes—Winnebago, Sioux, Chippewa, Menominee, Pueblo, Navajo and numerous others—holding a monthly gathering with vivid ceremonies of colorful pageant and vigorous song, and such dancing as I had never seen. Both your mother and I were intensely interested. She joined the Council Fire, and was initiated into the Winnebago tribe.

The Indians used to gather at our old house on Dover street with great Greek columns in front—and frequently put on moonlight dances accompanied by vigorous drumming in the big back garden.

Oliver La Mere, Winnebago chief, told me the reason the old men sat and watched while the young bucks danced was that one of the purposes of the celebration was to stir up the love emotion in both the youths and young women. Even the war dances, he said had a love-aspect.

Next night I went for a walk beside the Lake, where the waves were tossing and pounding beneath a northeast wind. Their roar sounded like drumming; and their tossing crests visualized the endless generations of Indian dances which had taken place along these shores through misty ages of the past.

Sound of the feet of the Indians beating in perfect cadence on our garden earth seemed to mingle with sound of feet of Greek dithyramboi, the Dionysian dancers out of whose measured strophes and anti-strophes arose the master-tragedies of the tragic poets; all, it appeared, centering around the themes of love and death.

So I wrote: "Drums." The idea is somewhat the same as you have seen in the City of Dreams:

> "Unending surf of love, whose foam are we,
> borne on its endless roar as foam is on the sea."

DRUMS

Throbbing drums beneath the moon
Thunder in an ancient rune;
Rising currents crest and roar
Pounding on a misty shore.
Drums that thunder, winds that wail
Gleaming shadows, flushed or pale,
Call me from forgotten years;
Wild remembrance drowns my fears.

Pounding rhythms in my blood
Roar within me like a flood.
—Fathers! Mothers! Ancient races!
Flaming eyes and straining faces!
All your passions, all your fears
Sweep upon me, down the years.
Life's hot current from you drives;
I am fruit of all your lives.

Look! Your living sons and daughters
Dance beside the dancing waters.
Throbbing drums beneath the moon,
Tides that thunder on the dune,
Waken fevers in our blood,
Roar within us like a flood;—
Endless longing—ageless pain—
Fathers! Mothers! Passion-chain!

Occasionally we went down to the Dunes, immortalized by many an artist. After one trip I wrote this, one of the first of my Chicago poems.

ON THE DUNES

Infinite movement—infinite repose!
  Clean sweetness pours from sand and sky and lake.
  Whatever way our laggard wanderings take
Each step some new bewildering beauty shows.

Here sumach burns, red on the cream-white drift;
  There quivering poplar stands like yellow flame;
  And everywhere the oaks their sturdier frame
Gorgeous in gold and russet crimson lift.

Autumnal mist along the curving shore
  Veils soft its distant reaches like a dream;
  Beyond, with shimmering opalescent gleam
The long blue breakers shine, and crest, and roar.

How sullen-foul, how vain and little worth
Those tall black chimneys seem, that desecrate the north!

We spent a summer vacation at Saugatuck, Michigan, where the Art Institute maintained an alumni school. On that trip I carved the head of a faun, which annually for years was brought out and planted in a pine-tree glade as the official signal of the opening of the season.

At the mouth of the river lies the buried town of Singapore,

once a prosperous lumber center, which had been covered by the drifting sand. This gave rise to wonder whether Chicago's Sky-Line might some day be swallowed by drifting sands. Even as Nineveh.

The sand was of a very fine quality, giving forth a musical note as one walked over it.

THE BURIED TOWN OF SINGAPORE

The singing sands of Singapore lie silken to the feet;
They croon beneath the passing tread in cadence clear and sweet.
The sliding sands of Singapore dance on from age to age,
Gentle beneath the summer sun, mad in the winter's rage.

The drifting dunes of Singapore lie white beneath the sun;
Lazy beneath the mantling grass their long slides form and run;
And dancing, sliding, singing sands laugh softly as they say;
"Our tribes shall drift in vale and lift when you have passed away;
When conquered towns are all forgot, and stifled streams are filled,
We shall play on, by dark and sun, though all your toil be stilled."

The buried town of Singapore lifts blackened bones on high
Uncovered in the heaving sand between the lake and sky.
So like a bleached and broken shell, whose builder long since died,
The sands shall veil and then reveal the phantom of our pride.

SONGS OF SECURITY

As you boys grew up and our family attained a settled sense of security, the feeling of deep satisfaction expressed itself in these:

SAFE HAVEN

Blind under stinging surf, outworn and spent
We too fought crashing waves like mountains piled,
Long buffeted by savage winds and wild,
Breath laboring hard, heart pounding and near rent.

But then a burst of sunlight cleft the storm,
Winds ceased, waves stilled, and heaven smiled again.
O sweet it was to walk on flowers then,
Where rocks stood steadfast, and bright sands lay warm.

Yet still we see young swimmers gasp and cry
  Struggling and plunging in the salty steep,
  Where winds howl ever, and black wrecks lie deep,
As lightnings flame athwart a furious sky.

We two are safe; while these young passions roar,
We walk serene at last along a peaceful shore.

PATHWAYS

If I could wander, when my day is done,
  Back through the ways my questing feet have taken,
And in the known light of tomorrow's sun
  Forecast my yesterdays, as they awaken,
How I would change my heading here and there;
  Take turnings right, where left I went before,
Dangers that once I dreaded boldly dare,
  And skirt deep bogs that once I floundered o'er.

But there's one pathway that with kindling eyes
  And speeding feet and heart athirst and fain
I'd hasten down, swift over dip and rise,
  Until the goal that crowned its length I'd gain.
No peril on that passage I would rue;
It is the homing trail that led my heart to you.

OUR OWN

White mountains, altar-like against clean sky
  I have beheld beneath a summer moon;
Dark seas that roared in purple, driven high
  By winds that whirled wild perfumes like a swoon;
Mad revels that in crimson robed the night;
  League upon league of cornland waving gold;
Pale palaces, with cedared marble white,
  Whose haggard splendors weary pride enfold,
Eyes whose rich fire, from faces magic fair,
  Intent unwary kingdoms might destroy;
Soft silken forms, swaying through drunken air,
  Wide cities palpitant with triumphal joy;
Yet none of these so lovely seemed to me
  As our three lads, who romp beneath our lilac tree.

ALCHEMY

With what strong alchemy like healing rain
  Has time made magic gold of dreaded dross!
For things I feared have come to be my gain,
  And what I longed for, once attained, is loss.
Music that rang mysterious-sweet afar
  When heard too close discordant seemed, and shrill;
But to atone, full many a fragrant star
  Bloomed hidden, where sharp thorns foreboded ill.
Sweet freedom once I held the dearest thing,
  That I might wander, where my will went free;
Yet now by choice to wonted haunts I cling,
  And find Arcadia glowing close to me.
Youth's rainbow dared me venture far and fleet;
But years, with gentler touch, showed rainbows round my feet.

In the early twenties an extraordinary flowering of verse occurred, largely due to the Column Poets. On the Tribune, kindly Dick Little ran the Line-o-Type; on the Daily News, Keith Preston conducted Hit or Miss; Richard Atwater on the Evening Post was the mentor of Pillar-to-Post. All managed to evoke verse of high quality.

During the First World War a poet signing himself The King of the Black Isles had flamed into glory through these columns. He proved to be John Urban Nicolson, manager of a storage warehouse. Nicolson, Preston and I dined occasionally together, usually at the Cliff-Dwellers. On one such occasion we decided to hold a Contributors Dinner, at which writers of verse should make themselves known beneath their noms-de-plume.

Calling the roll of contributors fell to my share, largely because of lung power. It was fun to see "Mary's Little Lamb" turn out to be a strapping six footer, and "The Pirate" revealed as a meek little school teacher who had always "wanted to be fierce."

A MINSTREL FRIAR

FRIAR TUCK CYCLE

Ever since the days when the Robin Hood ballads and stories first became known, the character of Friar Tuck had appealed deeply. When the Normans took over England, they had turned many a village into a deer park, driving the people out into starvation and lawlessness. Friar Tuck took their part against landlords and oppressors as chaplain to Robin Hood's band of outlaws.

Because my pen-name was Friar Tuck, and also because of long-standing admiration for the jovial chaplain of Robin Hood's band, a cycle of ballads on the theme of Sherwood Forest appeared in all the papers—except the one on which I was working; and why that was, you shall see later.

Thus came:

AN OUTLAW PRIEST

My brethren ten, with cowl and pen
  Their drowsy beads may tell;
I rank me with the outlaw men
  Who hide in glade and dell.
I left them to their carven fane,
  I left their altars rare.
They threaten ban and bale in vain.
  I will not wonne me there!

In ivied keep they pray and sleep,
  At spreaden board they dine.
Our feast is where the red deer leap,
  A gushing fount our wine.
They crook the knee to lords in fee,
  They kiss the hem of pride;
But here, beneathen greenwood tree
  Spirits unyoked we bide.

I brook no lord but Him of Heaven;
  I fear no master's rod.
On wrongs by them full easy shriven
  I launch the curse of God.
I would not smile on belted sin
  That bought them with its doles;
And He that judgeth us between
  Have mercy on their souls!

WOOING SONG

There came a maid to early mass,
  Sing Aleluya, wellaway!
A dark and comely gypsy lass—
  Sing hey, the barefoot maiden!
Black lay the wood with lingering night,
And welcome shone the candle-light
Within my chapel warm and bright,
  And weary was the maiden.

A knight knelt on the floor so bare,
  Sing aleluya, wellaway!
For grievous hurt sojourned he there,
  Sing ho, the forest rover!
But when he saw the kneeling maid,
Forgotten were the vows he said;
His heart lay snared in a dark hair braid,
  Alas, the knightly lover!

Now maids and men, hark well to me,
  Sing aleluya, wellaway!
Full blest shall such a wooing be,
  Sing hey, God loves a lover!
For they that meet in chapel cell
Are wooed and won and wedded well;
Their lives ring sweet like chiming bell,
  Forever and forever!

VESPERS

Within the shady covert there
I see them gathering, pair by pair,
  While all alone I toll my chime;
    De Profundis Clamavi!
  For vesper hour is wooing time—
    De Profundis Clamavi!

None answereth to my chapel cry,
Yet not a whit cast down am I;
  Round empty walls my song rings loud—
    De Profundis Clamavi—
  But there without I mark my crowd—
    De Profundis Clamavi!

For outlaws bold and maidens trim
They keep their tryst by vesper hymn;
  I chant, and smile, and pray my part—
    De Profundis Clamavi—
  And blessings on each faithful heart!
    De Profundis Clamavi!

REQUIEM

Let no sob-bemuffled tread
Bear me to my silent bed;
But thereon engraved be
"He met death right steadfastly"
While my comrades cheerly say
  "—In manus tuas, Domine!"

AT THE END OF THE ROAD

I have loved and I have fought—
Done not always as I ought—
Faults not light and sins not few
Bear upon me, this is true;
Yet for all I dare to say
"—Miserere, Domine!"

Life is joyous, while I live it;
Death is welcome, if Thou give it;
Gift of friends, and gift of life,
Joy of peace, and joy of strife,
For all these, and more, I say
"—Gratias tibi, Domine!'

THE FRIAR MUSES

If I were not so old, my dear,
And you were not so young,
What music had been yours to hear,
What magic had I sung,
Before false loves of yesteryear
Grew bitter on my tongue!

The flush that mantles on your check
And sets twin stars aglow
Might well have risen to hear me speak
And paled to see me go,
Could we have met ere winters bleak
Had crowned my head with snow.

And yet below his frozen sheath
An ice-bound brook may sing;
Though lapped with chill, encircling death
It hears the new life ring;
And still, to feel your fragrant breath,
My pulses leap, with spring!

AUTUMN SONG

Farewell, bright haze of autumn days,
On wood and meadow fading;
Build high the redly leaping blaze
'Gainst wintry winds pervading!

Yet paradise of summer skies
  And fragrance of each flower
In yonder winking goblet lies
  Past reach of winter's power.

Then drink, wassail! The memory hail
  Of summer's vine and roses,
Whose soul distilled from slope and vale
  In the friendly cup reposes.

Blessings divine on the cheery wine,
  On them that grow and tend it;
Whose treasure safe God's rich sunshine,
  That we at need may spend it!

* * *

In this gay and casual assemblage of Column Poets, the King of the Black Isles found no rivals.

The contributors had one dance on a summer evening in a club with a garden full of rustling trees. The moon was bright, that night. There was a terrace, with a fountain. All the contributors were there—including the King—most of them in costumes hinting at their nom-de-plume. So I wrote:

HALLOWE'EN

Full many an outlaw archer stout
  And many a village lass
They danced All Hallow's Even out,
  Till rang All Hallows' mass.
And little sleep the Friar took,
  And less he craved, I ween,
For at their sport his sides they shook
  That moonlit Hallowe'en.

And there was Isaac of Mescall
  And Rob, the Potter's lad,
And Wally of the crimson poll
  And David, lorn and sad.
And there was Peg o'Yardsley town,
  And Rose, with eyes aglow
Maid Marian with her hood of brown,
  And Ruth of far Glencoe.

And many a sip of fragrant wine
And many a cup of ale
Set feet a-trip and eyes a-shine
And frolic songs a-gale.
Anon came one with chain and blade
In richest garments clad;
This whispered every winsome maid,
And scowled each stalwart lad.

"Now put away that saucy frown,
Thou burly friar" saith he;
"For once went I to London town,
And eke there saw I thee."
With that he bent his plumed head
And said a word of grace;
Though none might hear what word he said,
All saw the Friar's face.

"Now be thou knave, or be thou king,
Or what thou wilt," said he,
"I trow it is a merry thing
To join our company.
For outlaws mostly be we here,
And nightwise must we play,
For that the sheriff's men be near
To housel us by day."

Quoth he; "God bless all merry whiles,
For now my heart is light;
Long lay I bound in the far Black Isles,
And I must dance tonight."
Then warely tripped the outlaw brood,
And featly tripped the stranger,
Till fell the moon by yonder wood;
Then muttered Matt the Ranger;

"There is a step in yonder brush,
A glint in yonder thicket,
A stir not made by lark or thrush,
A creak not made by cricket."
Then loudly rang a warning shout
As leaped the sheriff's men;
And many a sharp and lusty clout
Rang through the startled glen.

But all in mirth caught unaware,
And all with dancing blown,
Full foully might the outlaws fare,
And all were bound and thrown.
Then said the Friar with wrath aflame;
"Now hark ye to my rede;
If this dark knight will tell his name
Ye'll rue this reckful deed.

"Sore welcome truly have ye wrought
To one so lately bound,
Who for our English fame hath fought
On far-off foemen's ground."
And when the sheriff saw his prey
Down fell he on one knee;
And said; "My lord, woe worth the day
That ever bound I thee."

"Now haste, unloose my merry men,
And loose me" saith the knight;
"God give all English lads good-den—
And well ye all can fight!
Now sheriff's men and outlaws free,
Come, do King Richard's pleasure;
Since well ye all are loved by me,
We'll tread a friendly measure."

So every man he seized a maid,
And danced they all together,
And loud with laughter ran that glade,
All in the glad dawn weather;
And when the Friar rang his bell
All Hallows' morn to token,
All trooped into his chapel cell
To hear his mass bespoken.

And many a kiss was stolen there,
And many a vow was plighted;
Then said the King; "With lordly fare
This old wrath must be righted.
My stags are all king's venison;
We'll spread a feast, this sward on;
The Friar shall give his benison
And I will give my pardon.

"Then sup we on the sheriff's ale,
And feed we on my bounty;
And go ye forth all glad and hale,
And peace be on this county.
And as ye go, ye all shall sing,
Through cornland and through brier,
King Richard is a mery king,
And a merry priest the Friar!"

CONSOLATION

Rippled the stream like golden fire
Beneath an August moon
While lonely sat the elding Friar
And wept his youth aflown.
"When young was I, and fair to see,
Of women walked I wide,
For that on higher things than they
My thoughts would aye abide.

"Yea, luring lip, and beckoning eye
And waist so slender trim,
I bade them all far hence to hie
For love of prayer and hymn.
On missals and on marvels old
My mind ran night and day,
And all on what I should behold
When earth was passed away.

"And now, alack, alone I pine,
And gaiety is gone,
And never a chick nor child is mine
To mend me when I moan.
No friend have I save woodland craft
And arrows, keen and true!"—
And here he took a lusty draught
Of heady, nutbrown brew.

But while he spake he was aware
  Of weeping and of sigh
That shook from out a thicket near;
  And loud quoth he; "Come nigh!"
And forth there came a weeping maid
  With sorrowing step and slow;
With mud her kirtle was bespread,
  Her eyes were wild with woe.

"Now shrive me of your ghostly lore,
  For he I loved" saith she
"Ere two months wed hath beat me sore
  And posted off to sea.
I wept for that he loved me not,
  But now that he hath fled
I weep that I loved him, God wot"
  This angry damsel said.

With counsel wise he gave her ease;
  But even as she parted,
Another wandered through the trees,
  Bespent and heavy-hearted.
"Friar, I loved a maid" quoth he,
  "Yea, fond was I and true.
But even on our wedding-day
  She proved her well a shrew.

"I got no rest by day nor night,
  No joy by night or day;
Her tongue it drove me far in fright,
  So fiercely did she fray."
Then smiled the Friar in merriment
  And spake he to the moon;
"Now rest we twain in glad content
  Though we be old and lone."

"For here no voice of wrathful wife
  Nor plaint of jealous maid
May vex our peace with endless strife,
  Nor scorch our drowsy shade.
Ho, wed am I to forest craft,
  To arrows keen and hale!"
And then he took a lusty draught,
And chuckled deep, as deep he quaffed
  His heady, nut-brown ale.

ALAN A DALE'S SONG

The which he sang to Queen Eleanor at London Town.

Through a night that was dewy with wonder
  Through woodlands sweet-breathed like a fawn,
We fled by the summer sea's thunder
  To a cavern soft-haunted of dawn.
There lilting waves, whispering, pleading,
  Cast eerie light rippling above,
Till the heart of the sea, interceding,
  Bade her lean to the longing of love.

Ah, that song of the sea never weary,
  Ah, that dance of the dawn never dim!
And the liquid light, lilting and eerie
  Of the ocean's love-laughter a-brim!
But she left me alone while I slumbered,
  Nor I ever have found her again
And my love with the dead past is numbered,
  But forever and ever lives pain—

And the place where we met with my weeping is wet
  And my heart as with hunger is fain,
And the joy that we won with its blooming is gone,
  But forever and ever lives pain.

RAIN

Along a windy highroad I strode one dismal day;
Complaining of the weather that lowered damp and gray.
Till past me sped a colleen with light and dainty grace,
And in her shy poke-bonnet I spied a winsome face.

Then all at once no other thing meant half so much to me,
As speak to that sweet ladykin, and have her smile at me.
I wheeled and followed dumbly, a-cursing at my fate;
"Save it shall pass I meet this lass, then have I lived too late!"

Ah, blessings on that weather; for darker grew its frown.
And sharper blew its blether, and drops came pattering down.
So then my dainty lady looked rueful at the sky,
And looked around for shelter—and there at hand was I.

"Now save" quoth I "that bonnet, and share this cloak with me";
She tucked her hand beneath my arm, as sweetly as could be.
And off I walked beside her, nor was she loath to stroll,
Though blacker came the darkness down, and thunder 'gan to roll.

But golden shone that gloomy mist; sun never smiled so bright,
As shone that spitting storm-cloud upon us two that night.
Ah, blessings on that weather, and blessings on that rain,
That brought us two together—that shall no more be twain!

SONG

Ah, love! If I had met you
  A thousand years ago,
Where castles crowned dark misty crags
  To guard rich vales below;
If you, in princely purple
  With a circlet on your brow,
Had smiled upon me wistfully
  As I dreamed you smiled but now—

My right arm would have reft you
  From swords that fenced you round;
And we had galloped gloriously
  Across that dangerous ground;
My love had been your mantle,
  Your love had been my light,
To guide us through adventurous days,
  And ward us safe at night.

Like far, forgotten music
  Your fragrant presence rings—
Daughter of royal poets,
  Vision of dreaming kings!
Beneath my song's wild passion
  Your heart like fire would glow—
Ah, love! if I had met you
  A thousand years ago!

IRISH LOVE-SONG

There are crags all black and gleaming
  That rim a gray-blue sea,
And all the world of wonder
  Lies waiting there for me.
Calm deeps that brood beneath them,
  Pure skies that arch above,
Their image lies in the misty eyes
  Of the Irish girl I love.

That day when first I saw her
  Is marked with red and gold;
Its tingling thrill will warm me still
  When my heart is tired and old.
There are maids I'll not remember,
  There are maids I'll not regret;
But the lurking guile of her sidelong smile
  Hallows the day we met.

WINTER SONG

Out of the dark you came to me,
  Under a sky of gray;
Eddying snowflakes, drifting deep,
  Blotted the world away.

Your fragrance softened the winter wind;
  You passed, and you did not speak;
But your proud eyes veiled a sudden light,
  And roses bloomed in your cheek.

Deep though the snow may bank and drift,
  Black though the storm winds blow,
Summer sings ever within my heart
  Where roses of memory grow!

DIMPLES

My Peggy's nose is scornful,
  But Peggy's eyes are kind;
Her mouth it makes the sweetest bow
  That Love could ever find—

That Love could ever find, sir,
  To shoot his villain dart.
Her chin says "Never mind, sir!"
  But her dimples say "Sweetheart!"

EYES

Hazel eyes are mocking,
  Green eyes are cold;
Storms arise in bright black eyes,
  Passionate and bold;

Blue eyes are roving;
  Gray eyes are true;
But brown eyes are loving eyes—
  And they're the eyes—of you!

Keith Preston was an owl-eyed college professor of Latin and Greek classics, turned newspaper columnist. At the time we became acquainted I was a combination of inefficient business industrialist and chaplain at the Orphans home. Preston, Nicolson and I had wonderful times together. Both of them professed to be thorough pagans, yet surely of the God-beloved breed.

Among us we undertook to revive by way of the newspaper columns, ancient classic measures.

While I was at St. Mark's church, Dr. Guthrie, who had been Professor of General Literature at Sewanee, showed how to chant Latin poetry, and Greek as well. In high school we were taught that classic poetry was written not in meter, but in quantity. But no high school student knew what that meant.

Dr. Guthrie had quotations from Horace's Centurian Ode painted around the walls of the Guild Room in St. Mark's, and under his tutelage I learned that such lines as

Phoebe, silvarumque potens Diana

or

Integer vitae, scelerisque purus

sounded like a drum beat:

TUM ta-TUM TUM, TUM ta-ta TUM ta TUM TUM.

Swinburne was—until then—the only English poet who mastered this. I sang you boys to sleep many a time with the highly inappropriate lullaby of Swinburne's verse:

"All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids"

You knew it so well that once when Ernest, then about four, saw an electric washing machine in our basement churning up a vast quantity of white lather, he remarked:

"That reminds me of Aphrodite rising from the sea-foam."

First published in the columns of these chants in classic meter was this:

SEA SHELLS

Sweet the sunlit waves of thy blue Aegean
Foamed and fell on beaches of Mitylene;
Still their red shells wistfully chant, remembering
Thy songs, O lost one!

Sound the lyre, ye dwellers within the sunset!
Where far domes of Hesperus, wide, resplendent
Tinge with gold the mellowing calm around you,
Sing to the West Wind.

Swift its pinions, out of the purple winging
Where yon white star blazes against the twilight
Will rekindle, bright under drifted ashes
Fires long a-slumber!

From my old Seacliff days I remembered how to handle a guitar tuned in the Spanish key. My brother Gardiner taught me that; and I ceased to regard the guitar as a trivial instrument on learning that it is the same as the cithara, or harp, in Greek and Latin, and the qithara in Assyrian. It is as near as we can come now to the harp on which David played the accompaniment of his songs.

So then Nicolson and Preston and I entered a sort of contest, reviving these ancient classical measures.

Perhaps the best of mine are:

DAWN WINDS

Keen the dawn winds rustle the bending rushes
Where yon shadowed rivulet rippling murmurs,
Tense, expectant, eager with awe to welcome
Thee, O Apollo!

Round yon hilltop lazily wreathing incense
Soars and billows over a marble altar
Where they white priest, facing the golden sunrise
Waits thine appearing.

Far beyond cool-plunging the seas of Hellas
Foam in purple toward the Ionian headlands,
Faint beheld where crags of a misty islet
Loom through the dawn-haze.

Now behold! far-darted the shafts of morning
Smite with glory peak upon peak above them
Where in white snow surges a silent ocean
On toward Olympus.

Hark! with silver sound of a shaken sistrum,
Flutes and cymbals piercing the hush of dawning
Peals the hymn, where filleted youths and maidens
Hail thee, O Sun-God!

Named or nameless, ever with eyes exalted
Lord, we seek Thee under the lifting shadow
Light eternal, out of Thy deathless glory
Our dusk illumine!

SEA FIRES

Wild with red gold faded the West before thee;
Breezes warm-winged, laden with breath of honey
Drove and plumed melodious seas, caressing
Thy shores, O Daphne!

Tall thy red cliffs front upon tumbling waters,
Crowned with dark pines, mystical litanies chanting
Deep like harp-strings chorded by wandering fingers
Borne on the salt-winds.

Look! exultant, piercing the purple twilight
Leaps a flame where, steep upon steep a-kindle
Blaze far star-fires, flaring victorious signals
From peaks of darkness.

See, in answer, wave after wave responding
Burns in white fire, trailing a luminous glory;
Sea to sky in yearly reconaissance hailing;
"All's well, O brother!"

Chief foe of Nicolson, Preston and myself in this tournament of song was Harriet Monroe, editor of POETRY, a magazine of verse widely acclaimed as a herald of the "New Poetry".

What could I say in an age which hails

"Hog-butcher of the world"

as great poetry? Or endures alphabet-soup productions in which verse consists simply in spreading broken fragments of meaningless syllables over a page of once white paper?

Harriet Monroe poured scorn on both Nicolson and myself. She was especially bitter at the King, because of his gift of melody. Nick simply laughed—he sang for the joy of singing, not for any commendation he might get from any magazine. So I wrote this balled:

SONG OF A BLACKBIRD

A crow perched herself on a sycamore tree
With a Caw—Caw—Caw!
And laid down the law most emphatic and free
—Caw! Caw! Caw!
Said she: "I am throned as Czarina of song,
And woe to that wight of the twittering throng
Who trills any lay I declare to be wrong—
Caw! Caw! Caw!'

A Blackbird came merrily roving that way
With a Carolay, Carololee!
His heart all aflame with the magic of May
Singing Carolay, Carololee!
But his torrent of melody worried the Crow,
Who in accents cacophonous bade him to go
For his trills and his lilting they "hurt her ears so,"
And his "carolay, carololee!"

But the minstrel bird cocked an impertinent eye,
With a "carolay, carolola!"
At the poor old Pretender marooned in the sky,
With her "Caw—Caw—Caw!"
Said he: "Make the blossoms cease blooming in May,
Rob the moon of her magic, the waves of their play,
Bid the winds end their singing, and see what they say
To your Caw—Caw—Caw!"
But the Crow merely croaked in bewildered dismay;
"Caw! Caw! Caw!'

When Nicolson died, I wrote this threnody, which the Tribune published in Line-o-Type, then conducted by Charles Collins.

THE KING IS DEAD

Silent among bare boughs, birds of bright song
Veiled lusterless their eyes beneath cold rain,
Nor was there melody the whole day long,
Nor any movement, save of sodden pain.
Then; "We have lived too long" one sighing said.
Who can take flight again?—the King is dead."

Beneath his call poor words rose up and sang
  As though on battlefields sore wounded men
Heard where one walked where conquering trumpets rang,
  And feeling strength pour through their limbs again
In gallant companies went unafraid,
  Touched into knighthood by his accolade.
    "Mournful they falter, those proud ranks of song.
    The King is dead—and we have lived too long."

Out of dull dust came trooping in glad youth
  Forgotten stories, long unspoken themes;
Beauty renewed her ancient bond with truth;
  New nightmares fled before old glorious dreams.
Splendor came back where had been noisy grime,
And all the panoply of an elder time
  Seemed fresh and bright again;—
    'But that is fled.
    We have endured too long;—the King is dead."

Well he knew magic;—at his quickening word
  Fires of old feasting flamed through ruined halls,
And broken harps, mysteriously stirred
  Gave voice from strings long mute on dusty walls.
The cup of melody wakening high desire
Passed lip to lip, abrim with mellow fire.
New music flowed distilled from ancient song;—
    "But now, that cup is dry; we live too long."

His voice called up remembrance of far scenes
  Whereon eye never dwelt, yet knew full well.
Ancestral drums rang in quick-pulsing veins,
  And glamor gleamed on tawdry streets of hell.
On golden-towered Babylon once more
Hot suns burned blinding by her marshy shore;
    "Emerald seas, and seas of agate, wandering under the sky
    Roar all forlorn;—alas, that kings must die."

In freezing hovels witch-gaunt Paris stirred
  And hummed again her balladry of pride.
Long swelling melodies in torrent poured
  Down winding channels turbulent and wide,
Through jewelled stones or under pleasant shade,
And every eddy dashing music made;
  "Now empty like white skulls their courses lie,
  Songs may live on—alas, that minstrels die."

Strongly he sang—but that gay voice is mute;
  Rich were its echoes, but their sound is fled.
Dust gathers on his laurels, reft his lute;
  "Sing once, and then no more;—the King is dead."

Reviving the crescendo, this was written about 1920 to a girl poet in Greenwich village. Knowing that I was a young minister she put on a good deal of a pose. In later years she displayed much more sophistication than this verse would imply.

Outside her apartment window ran the noisy garbage-laden grime of the lower West Side. But inside there was calm.

  A golden lily, fragrant in the dawn,
Deep-hearted, quivering sweet with freshly-glittering dew,
  My careless footsteps, startled, stumbled on
    Mid murk and grimy noise.
  Without, foul roaring streets of dingy hue;
  Within, a fountain garden-bowered—and you.
Winds wept on silver strings, melting into your voice,
    And charmed the din away.

  We wandered from that garden, you and I,
Through stormy lands and trails, across the sea's broad face;
  Through desolate plains that hungered for the sky.
    We left all bounds behind.
  Yet in your thoughts I found the sweetest place,
  Like myrtle groves of cool seductive grace.
For, fronting pain and death, you stooped and grieved to find
    A floweret thrown away.

More than a body like a flower I found;
More than a mind that sweeps the skies with tireless wing.
A shrine stands there where comes no evil sound;
There is a holy place.
There one has loved the grassy blades apart
And laid a finger on God's beating heart;
And there a fearless soul dared Fate's forbidden face
And wondered Death away.

This poet was described by Keith Preston thus: "We knew her for a woman with a wise and bitter tongue." But at the time I met her I had just been sentenced to prison by Judge Landis for twenty years, for protesting against war profiteering. This girl's kindly, healing sympathy made a deep impression on me. You will recognize the references to "one who loved the grassy blades apart" if you are familiar with the poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay.

A course of lectures by Prof. Robert Morss Lovett, of the University of Chicago, on the English poets, revealed that Wordsworth as a young man had fought on the barricades in the French Revolution. This kindled for the first time an interest in his writings, which before that time had bored me to tears. Revulsion against the excesses of the French Revolution drove him to the Lake Country, where he meditated for hours at a time, and found

"Little here to do or see
But listen to the flapping of the fire."

He sang about lakes and trees, and for his principal subjects chose idiot boys and Lucy Greys. So about Wordsworth in this new knowledge of him I wrote:

WORDSWORTH

How great a distance had his soul retired
From roaring mobs of France, from bristling barricades,
Bastiles destroyed, palaces stormed and fired
And empires overthrown
When on the Northern plains where tumult fades
He hymned a primrose mid the evening shades,
And on gray sunburned rocks, with lichens overgrown
Listened whole days away.

Cathedral-builder of the barren moors
He toiled a whole life long, with carven thoughts for stone,
With waterfall and stormwind, birds and flowers
For acolytes and choir;
Summoning the sunset glow, the glare of noon
Pale mists of morning and the midnight moon
To glorify his fane, with stars cold-glittering fire
For sanctuary lights

Within that minster constantly dwelt he,
Beneath whose towering arch, intruding sounds were dumb.
The "still, sad music of humanity"
Smote distant on his ear.
Except as little children ye become,
You cannot call that wondrous temple home;
For at the altar stands—high-priest, whom all revere—
The spirit of a child.

* * *

Another result of Prof. Lovett's course is this Crescendo on Coleridge.

COLERIDGE

Too high the eagle's gaze, for his young wing.
He soars but once; and then, upon his sunlit crag
He dreams and wonders, while the bright clouds swing
And shroud his glittering eye.
Seared by the Sun, his fluttering pinions drag.
Short flights he tries, but round his nest must lag;
Yet through the golden air and tempest-beaten sky
His soul floats far and free.

Yet lo—around him springs a glorious brood,
Strong-winged, stout-hearted, swift; fearless and golden plumed.
Through earth and sky they range, across the flood,
To distant peaks of snow.
Taught by the lame old king—to dreaming doomed—
They build where Jove's Olympic thunders loomed;
And through proud India's peaks to Tartar wastes they go
In tameless ventures free.

And still the eaglets wing around his old nest.
Hovering around the crag, where once he dwelt apart
To strange new lands and peaks they turn their quest
Still guided by his cry.
Oh Coleridge, broken wing—but eagle heart!
Shelley and Keats and Byron from you start;
And wheeling round your home, sons of the spanless sky
Hail you—who made them free.

THE CHURCH BECKONS

During most of this time I was unattached to the church, except for occasional assistance to friendly clergy.

At one of these contributors dinners, a group of young people invited me to their church, then without a pastor. It was St. Stephen's. A pompous bishop had refused to visit it for some 11 years for presuming to go ahead too fast without his knowledge. The structure was in bad shape. There was almost no congregation. I went there.

That was twenty-two years ago. I have been there almost every Sunday ever since.

This church, we resolved, would never contract an all-devouring debt. What we needed we made ourselves. If we could not make it, and if it was not given to us, or if we could not pay for it in cash, we went without it.

With our own hands we sawed, whittled, shaped and sewed whatever was needed for the glory of God, unless it required a professional touch. Even then, electrical work, plumbing and bricklaying were largely done by our own people.

In many ways the Little Church is in itself a poem we have literally "composed"—put together. You will bear witness that it is beautiful.

When Keith Preston died, we held a memorial service for him at St. Stephen's. Contributors came, bringing verses and quips that had appeared in his columns, for a memorial collection. First of these was a shy little poem, signed "Frankie",

beginning "Our Dear Little Church at the End of the Road." That gave the structure the name by which it is most widely known.

In memory of Preston, I wrote a song, to the air known as "Danny Boy."

Your voice is hushed, but still we hear it ringing;
  Your eyes are closed, but still we see them smile,
As seabirds o'er new-travelled waters winging
  Fly back from some horizon-hidden isle.

We shall remember, though it waken sorrow;
  We shall enshrine the name whereon we grieve;
And every friendship that is ours tomorrow
  Shall make more dear the memories that you leave.

* * *

Under the influence of the Church, my poems began to assume a more traditional ecclesiastical ring, such as these sonnets:

TWELFTH NIGHT

Now glorious in the midnight sky—behold!
  Those Three Great Kings that belt the night with flame,*
In gorgeous strict processional of gold
  Swing centering on the Star of Bethlehem.
Through all the year they sought from dark to day
  To find the hidden place where Light was born,
While Herod Darkness, seeking Him—to slay—
  Reddened the skies with blood of many a morn.

O trim the deathless Tree with stars of faith;
  Bright holly's crimson, undefeated bough,—
Warm Summer's pledge against encircling death—
  Bring wreathed, to deck the young year's kingly brow.
The Sun of Life, with healing in his wings.
Returns new-born, to crown with love all living things.

**i.e.—The three stars forming the Belt of Orion, which the French call "Les trois Rois".*

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Hot leaped the living thunder from thy tongue
  Rolling like surf in that huge gilded dome
Where scornful eaglets, brood of Eastern Rome
  Mocked weak Arcadius, cowering to the throng.

Pale-lipped his empress, furious for thy doom,
  Saw baffled from her lattice far and wide
  Wild torches flow on Bosporus like a tide
To welcome thee from exile to thy home.

O greatest! when with riven earth a-shake
  When thy three thousand converts in the flood
  Of new baptismal waters mixed their blood,
Thy wrath made bronze-helmed legionnaires quake.

Death, craven, in lone deserts bare and bleak,
Smote thee in silence—fearing to hear thee speak!

One Christmas I wrote a carol in the antique manner and sent it in to the managing editor, Victor Watson. Shortly after old man Tuttle, his fumbling private secretary, came out and bent over my desk.

"Mr. Watson told me to find out where you got that poem" he whispered sibilantly.

"Where I got it? I wrote it" replied.

"But Mr. Watson said it was so good you must have copied it from somewhere" he persisted. "Where did you get it?"

"Give me that poem!" I exploded, grabbing it from his hand. In a towering rage I sent it by the news-tube over to the Tribune, addressing it to RHL—Dick Little—who then ran the Line-o-Type column, with a note reading:

"Dear Dick: I have a special reason for asking you to display this, if possible, at the head of the column on Christmas Day."

So on Christmas Day it appeared at the head of the column. I underlined it heavily in black ink and sent it to Watson. I never did find out whether he understood.

YULE SONG

Green be the garland your window adorning,
  Bright be the candle within it aglow.
Swiftly bud midnight for you into morning,
  Staunchly your evergreen stand in the snow.

  Earth, be at peace, beholding God's glory;
    Break, O long night, into marvellous morn.
  High over temple and town rings the story;
    NEWS! On this day our Redeemer is born.

Palace of Herod and Holy Place scorning
  Look! In a manger His head lieth low.
Far over snowy hills rings a glad warning;
  "Ye who seek Heaven, to Bethlehem go."

  Earth, be at peace, beholding God's glory;
    Break, O long night, into marvellous morn;
  High over desert and peak rings the story;
    NEWS! for we all in God's Son are reborn!

UNTO THE HILLS

Night on the shores of Galilee;
  Westward a weary moon
Sank to the purple curve of the Sea
  That murmured a welcome croon.
Sleepers on housetops smiled and stirred,
  Healed of their racking ills;
Out from the door went Jesus unheard,
  Lifting His eyes to the hills.

Dawn on the peaks of Galilee;
  Eastward a silver star
Rose in a tremulous ecstasy
  With never a shadow to mar.
Up from the Lake a breeze like a bird
  Hovered on brooding wings;
Softly the locks of Jesus stirred
  Alone of created things.

Sunlight lay crimson, east to west;
  Out from the crowded street
Multitudes pouring in eager quest
  Followed the print of His feet.
Hot grew the day, and dense the throng;
  Ever His deep eyes turned
Up to the hill of the nightwind's song,
  And the peak where the Day-Star burned.

When Wallace E. Conkling became bishop of Chicago, he brought a strong emphasis on the ancient stronghold of the faith—spiritual healing. In hope that this emphasis would recapture that forgotten realm, I wrote:

THE HANDS OF JESUS

With gentle hands came Jesus
  To touch a pain-racked head.
Beneath His smile and blessing
  The startled anguish fled.
For from the deeps within Him
  God called that tortured soul;
"Be fear and fever ended;
  Thy faith hath made thee whole."

O gentle-handed Jesus!
  Renew that ageless power
Within Thy church, storm-beaten
  In this bewildered hour.
Anoint our hands with healing
  To bring from gulfs above
In cleansing benediction
  Life-currents of Thy love.

AFTER THIRTY YEARS

Looking back you will remember The Commission, written when I left home for the first time, in the dawn of the century.

Thirty years later, I stood again on Montrose at sunset. During all that elapsed time, there had been only one or two visits, and these but for a few days at a time. My grandiose

dreams had not been fulfilled. I had not covered the West with a mantle of poetry, nor had I won deathless crowns of fortune or of fame. All that I had accomplished of truly lasting worth was the acquisition of the three sons for whom this book is written.

On the top of Montrose, an answering poem, "Home" sang itself to me in identical meter and rhyme.

It was during the worst of the great Depression. I had lost my job. We were very hard up. The country was paralyzed. On the way down to Mobile, trains had been all but deserted. In the enormous St. Louis Union Station, when I changed trains there, was only one other traveller, and there were but three other passengers on the train from St. Louis to Mobile.

But on the way back, the tide had turned, The Chicago World's Fair of 1933 already had begun to pull a gentle current of travel, later to increase into the rushing, roaring torrent that routed the depression. I had been offered a job by wire. It was April of 1933. An epoch had ended, and another had begun.

Thirty years lie between these two poems, The Commission and Home.

HOME

With eager, warm red lips you called to me,
  Land of my childhood, that I turn again
Home where your burdened rivers seek the sea;
  Home, to the flying creek and cedared glen.
  Across a fleeting score of years and ten
I answered, half expecting I should find,
  Roaming those unforgotten slopes again,
Their magic vanished to an eye gone blind,
Their myriad wonders waned, that wooed my childish mind.

But now with welcome lavished from full store
  You have received me to old charm unfrayed.
Your waves still chant along the fragrant shore
  Soft songs they crooned when as a lad I played
  Athwart their tumbling; nor did glories fade

From western sky-hung pinnacles I knew
When twilight bared bright phalanxes arrayed
Against pulsating deeps of darkening blue,
While salt winds harped tall pines in cadence rich and true.

Changed are my friends; gray locks and bending forms,
Brows deep engraved with ravage of harsh care,
Eyes shadowed with remembrance of hard storms
I see in playmates still abiding there.
But morning, ever young and changeless fair
Brightens the bearded oaks with hanging gold;
Gay myrtles laugh; sage cypress braids her hair;
Mysterious woods their ancient tales unfold,
Murmuring the same vague myths my infancy they told.

Forever ageless rolls the Gulf's blue plain,
Familiar gulls above its whitecaps wheeling
Beneath high purple granaries of rain.
Its salt waves cradle me with ancient healing.
Life and destruction even-handed dealing,
To me they bring but peace, wherein to rest.
In light sun-laughter or in storm-tones pealing
Their surf-voice is the same that thrilled my breast
When first I dared their foam, and plunged beneath their crest.

It is not true that Eden-gates are barred
Forever from all quest of homing feet.
False are old fables—that quick-flaming ward
Of guardian falchions drives to swift retreat
Souls who seek Paradise where once its sweet
Remembered wilderness spread deep and wide.
For when I came, distrustful lest I meet
Curt ban "Go back, where all life's pools lie dried"
I heard your welcoming hail; "Son! Enter—and abide!"

If you ask "What became of the national epic?" the answer is "Look around you."

That youthful dream of The Chosen Nation has come true. When it was composed, our country was disdained by arrogant

elder empires. Americans were apologetic in face of these superior cultures. "Things they do better abroad" and "What will those countries think of us?" were themes constantly repeated. It was considered a great condescension when the holder of some bankrupt title conferred his dignity on the daughter of some vulgarly rich American millionaire. Our first Duchesses and Princesses were looked at with awe.

Those things have changed. Our country rules the world.

Those bitter ballads of the labor rising have seen their hopes bear fruit. Unemployed workers are no more outcasts, but objects of governmental care. Sweat shops have become places of clean dignity.

This, then is the epic. These poems were swords swung in that long battle, sharp arrows sent stinging into enemy ranks. Some singer on a hilltop far off from the struggle may write about it. We were—in it.

Always the edge of the plow is blunted by the rocks it encounters. It may remove the stones, but it loses its sharp cutting zest.

No victory is won without some bloodshed. No way has ever been discovered of waging a safe war.

This was the origin of these Christmas songs. Ordinarily hymns and sermons at Christmas time depict that holy night as one of universal rejoicing. Actually it was a time of stark terror. The visit of the Wise Men was a political event of great importance. Massacre of the babies of Bethlehem followed ordinary procedure. Every successful claimant to a throne slaughtered all possible rivals.

Before that, Moses' exodus was accompanied by slaughter. David's triumphs were brought about by ceaseless waves of killings. Our revolution, our Civil War, our World Wars were bloody and horrible. As they recede into the past, we forget the pain, remember only the victory.

THE SORROWFUL MOTHER

Sheep-herders, searching crowded streets
  Where once King David trod,
Found Mary, cuddling on her breast
  The new-born Lamb of God.
"There came a Light" said they "a song,
  Then voices from the sky
Bade us go seek, in Bethlehem town,
  One born this night—to die."

They bowed before the sleeping Child
  And looked at Him in wonder,
While Mary clasped His baby warmth
  But felt chill dread thereunder.
"Those flocks we tend" the shepherds said
  "Are all of Temple strain,
Bred for the daily sacrifice
  Upon God's altar slain.

"That message came to us at toil;
  'Twas heard not in the city.
Is this the Child we come to seek?"
  They gazed on her with pity.
"If this be He the prophets told
  Who should bring peace tomorrow
"Lady, small peace is yours" they said;
  God fend you in your sorrow."

The oldest shepherd spread his hands
  Close to the fire's last ember.
"We clutch at all God's gifts" he said,
  "Their cost we'll not remember."
But Mary bravely to her breast
  Held close her Infant, sleeping.
"Sirs, thank you for your kindly word,"
  She said;—then fell to weeping.

How can we soothe away the sorrows of the world? If we could, there would be no world, only a flat indistinguishable sea

of undifferentiated mud. If out of all our pain a new life is born, or a true life strengthened, we may rest content.

MOTHER OF JESUS

Mother of Jesus,
You sang to your baby
Lullabies holy
  That soothed Him to rest.
No fear of the morrow,
No boding of sorrow
Could pierce through the shelter
  Of your tender breast.

Mother of Jesus
My comforter be.
Fear holds all nations
And darkness the sea.
Mother of Jesus,
Your songs I would borrow;
In the hour of my sorrow
  O sing them to me!

Mother of Jesus
Too well you remembered
Bethlehem's babies
  In sacrifice slain.
Though far away fleeing
Your sad eyes were seeing
Their mothers in anguish;
  Your heart knew their pain.

Mother of Jesus,
My comforter be.
Fear holds all nations
And darkness the sea.
Mother of Jesus
Your songs I would borrow;
In the hour of my sorrow
  O sing them to me!

There is a stone altar beneath the trees in the Garden of Memory of the Little Church at the End of the Road.

Often have you heard its story. During the depth of the depression members of the Church could not make an Easter offering because all were out of work. What should they do?

Among the thousands of brick salvaged to make our Fyson Porch were stone slabs which had been stairways, window-sills, door steps. We took these stones that had felt the tread of many feet through many years and of them built an altar among the trees behind the church. It was completed on Easter Even, by yellow lantern beams, so that the first full rays to shine on it would be that of the Easter morning sun.

So let it be with these poems, like stones that have felt the tread of many feet.

There is no greater joy than to build an altar in your Garden of Memory at the End of the Road.

VISION OF THE WHIRLWIND

Stand here; look down the valley of all years.
See how the cold gray dust, blown by the wind,
Lifts from the earth into strange myriad forms;
King, warrior, saint;—drab, outcast, dolt and sage;
See how the dust wraps up that mighty Breathing
In all these shapes that clamor—and collapse.

Hark, how the roar unceasingly that swells
Above that motley host; song, shriek and prayer,
The vow of love, the scream of agony,
The minstrelsy, the dirges and the groan—
Blends into one great sound;
"God! What am I?
Whence came this Wind? And what art Thou to me?"

Here shall you see the answer God has given
To man's great Quest that makes all ages one;
"I am the living Wind. Look up—thou art My Son!"

Verses signed "Friar Tuck" have appeared over a period of some thirty-five years in Chicago's newspaper columns. Thousands have treasured these poems, some of which, set to music, have been widely sung.

Other thousands have met in person the Friar, who in real life is the Rev. Irwin St. John Tucker, pastor of the Little Church at the End of the Road, and also a veteran member of the editorial staff of the Herald-American.

His "Little Church" famed through magazine and radio as a national shrine of poetry and art, is the regularly constituted mission of St. Stephen, a part of the Protestant Episcopal diocese of Chicago. Pilgrimages are made to it by groups of many kinds, often from other cities.

The Friar has lived with inexhaustible zest an unusual life. Born in Mobile, Alabama, when it was a sleepy little Southern town, he grew up in the rectory of St. John's Church, for which he was named. His father was rector of that church for fifty-six years.

As a boy, he carried newspapers tracing the swift progress of the Spanish American war. As a youth he served on papers in New Orleans, Fort Worth, St. Louis, Chicago.

Entering the ministry just before the outbreak of World War I, he crusaded against what he held to be abuses both on the labor front and in the war. Later, undertaking a business career, and finding himself temperametally unfitted for it, he went back to newspaper life, and simultaneously to activity in the church.

During the period of this double life—which does not seem at all strange, the way he tells it—a ceaseless stream of verses appeared. These, together with the story of each, form the substance of this book.

There is nothing in literature quite like this "Legacy of Song." It is more than a bequest of verses. It seeks to impart a look at life—an open secret which can fill with excitement any existence, no matter how seemingly dull its surroundings may be.

During this one life-span, the face of the world has changed more profoundly than in any similar period of former years. These verses give a picture of successive world-conflagrations, as reflected in a single developing consciousness.

Very early the Friar conceived the idea that this nation should have its epic voice, like Greece, like Italy, like England. He set himself to be that voice.

On leaving home at the age of 16, he composed a kind of dedication to the Evening Star, as the Spirit of Poetry.

Thirty years later, visiting those same childhood scenes, he confesses inability to fulfill this high trust. Too deeply immersed in endless struggles to sing about them, he passes on to his sons and to their generation the task of embodying the Soul of America in worthy verse.

His wife—"unchanged, a laughing gypsy"—and their home provide the theme of a large proportion of these songs.

From the first childish doggerel to the concluding Vision of the Whirlwind, they breathe a spirit of deep devotion and calm unshakable faith. The publisher believes reading of the book will provide an unforgettable experience.

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